

無職転生

異世界行ったら
本気だす

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Rifujin na Maganote
理不尽な孫の手



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Mushoku Tensei

– Isekai Ittara Honki Dasu –

- Volume 14 -

**Young Man Period
~ Everyday Chapter ~**

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リーリャ

シルフィエット

ルーデウス

ロキシ

ルーシー

ゼニス

ノルン

アイシャ

人物紹介



「実はさ、この仕事が一段落ついたら、
あんたの家に行くつもりだったんだ」



CHAPTER 1

ROXY BECOMES A TEACHER

Part 1

I awaken. It's because of a sweet smell. While I was asleep, what drifted by was a lovely scent.

"!?"

When I open my eyes, there lies God. A face that could be described as innocent is turned towards me, and I could hear their peaceful sleeping breaths.

"Ohhh..."

I quietly leave the covers and sit in seiza. I join my hands and bow. At any rate, this is an esteemed personage.

"Hang on, could it be, that, this means..."

I notice a certain matter and I raise the blanket that was covering God's body.

When I do, it is as expected.

Truly, as expected.

What lies there is...

What lies under the blanket is...!

The nude body of God!

"Ohhh...!"

A body that could be considered too young. A body that is certainly not womanly, and whose waist has no hips. Though, it is dark and I am uncertain, were there not urna at her chest? Were they not the same urna found on the forehead of Buddha? No, they probably weren't urna. However, there's no mistake that they were something as precious.

"-Gulp-"

Is it not fine to touch?

It is not something sinful.

At any rate, I am the one who has been chosen by God.

There is no sin in me, the Messiah, touching the body of God.

Be that as it may, is it really fine to touch her whilst she lies in the midst of Nirvana?

If I touch her here, will I not be burdened with Karma, and be unable to reach Nirvana?

Will I not be stopped by a halo of light and be purified with, "Begone, Mara!" the instant I touch her?^[1]

Even though my disciple/angel^[2] is so Paul-ish this early in the morning...

"Mn... Cold..."

God pulls in the blanket and, in her stirs, hides her body, and turns the other way.

"Ohhh..."

How divine!

That white nape that peeks through her blue hair!

A nape that is anything but sultry!

Those kiss marks that I left yesterday!

Magnificent.

To be able to see such a sight, there's no mistaking that I am the happiest person in the world.

...Oops, no good. There's no time in the morning, so, I'd best wake her up.

"Roxy, please wake up. It's morning, you know."

"Mn..."

God opens her eyes, and slowly raises her body. The blanket slips down, and the form of her beautiful back is revealed. Behold, this is the dawn of mankind.

"...Good morning."

God drowsily turns her head. Her eyes are sleepy. Two urna are on her chest, and, below that is an adorable navel. Wrapped in small panties is a small Mañjusaka.^[3] Seeing this before my eyes, my stupa bears enough Karma to reach enlightenment.^[4]

"Ah..."

Raising the blanket, she hides her body. In that instant, I understand that God had died. The light was lost, and an age of darkness began.

"What's wrong? You're making a regretful face."

"I was just thinking that I'd like to see your esteemed body in a place with more light, Roxy."

"...Though, I doubt there's anything enjoyable about looking at it..."

"What words do you speak? Come now, please part with the blanket and allow the humble me to revere the sun."

"Why are you so energetic this early in the morning...? Well, if you're willing to say that much, I guess it doesn't matter at this point, but..."

Whilst saying this, Roxy slowly reveals what was under the cloth. When she does, the world is bathed in light.

Let there be light, and it was good.

I see the light, and find darkness; if light was called Apollo, then darkness was called Eros.

By the darkness are her navel, Cupido, and her thighs, Amor.

It is the First Day.

"That's enough, right?"

She said, as she covers herself again. Again, an age of darkness... Oh well, I guess that's enough of that.

"Um, Rudi."

"Yes, what is it?"

"Thank you for last night."

Roxy lowers her head. I recall the days that passed until I finally did 'that' with Roxy. It was decided that once my child was born, Roxy would become one of my wives. Having said that, though, I hadn't done 'that' with Roxy until today. I was busy taking

care of my child. Roxy herself, held back. Though she understood, Roxy was probably uneasy.

That's why I tried my best to wipe away her unease.

As much as possible, I tried to treat Roxy like a princess; as much as I could, I attended to her. Because I wanted her to receive all my love, I showed her the core of the Rudeus Style.

Because of that, my jaw still hurt. I used my tongue too much. Anyway, I should have properly conveyed my love. Roxy was satisfied, after all.

"Still, to think that kind of... method? Technique? To think 'that' that existed. I had no idea."

Turning red, she looks left and right as she speaks.

"Huhu, the world is a large place."

I used all the techniques I've cultivated until now. A 'course' that made Sylphy completely helpless, and left her gasping for breath.

I wanted to make Roxy gasp for her breath, as well. So that I could fulfil my desires, it was the shortest course. Or, so that's how it should've been, but Roxy was a little different than I had expected. She asked questions at every turn.

[What should I do?] she'd ask.

Though it was in the middle of 'an exchange between man and woman', she was earnestly studying. Each time, I would explain in detail, and instruct her in various techniques.

"Please teach me various things next time, as well."

"No, even if you just lay in bed, Roxy-sensei, I'd completely take care of everything, you know?"

"No, no, I want to become more skilled in these sort of things, as well."

Honestly, she really is a bit different than I thought. However, it's not a bad thing. Sylphy and Roxy have their own ways of doing things. Both let me satisfy myself, so I have no complaints at all.

"...I'll be late for school, huh?"

With a red face, she quickly turns her face away from me and slowly rises from the bed. I don't leave my seiza. Let's watch her small white butt until she leaves the room.

"Mn? What is it?"

"No, it's nothing."

Since Roxy turns back to look at me, I put on a show of getting changed, as well.

"..."

Suddenly, I can feel Roxy gazing at me from behind. Should I raise my arms overhead and start doing muscle poses? Or, so I was thinking, when Roxy totters over to me and touches my back.

"Sorry. It seems I scratched you. Does it hurt?"

"Mn?"

I turned my head to have a look. I have four swells like long earthworms on my back. When I give it a touch, it stings a little.

Roxy gave them to me last night. In other words, a medal of manhood. Ahh, now that I recall Roxy's face at the time, I'm starting to get horny... Oops, not good, not good. I don't have time to think about that sort of thing in the morning.

"They're fine."

"I hope they don't leave scars..."

Roxy's face is bright red. She doesn't mention healing it with magic, and is probably remembering last night, as well.

When I look at her face, my gaze stops on her eyes. She has beautiful light blue eyes and I could see myself reflected in them. She closes them. It was the face of someone waiting for a kiss. If I kiss her here, we'd probably begin a second round. That's why I confined it to just stroking her cheek.

"...Let's get changed."

"Y-, yeah. Right!"

In a panic, Roxy jumps away from me. She then dresses, starting with her bra. When I am sure that she is changing, I get dressed as well.

"Rudi, do I look weird anywhere?"

After we finish changing, Roxy does a spin in front of me and shows her robed appearance to me. Her three braids gently dancing in the air.

"You look fine."

"Really?"

"Of course."

I reply warmly. If there are any bastards who say anything about her appearance, I'm not gunna let them go. That's how I feel about it.

"Today is my first day teaching, huh. I can't mess up."

Saying so, Roxy clenches her fists. Starting from today, she would go to school. Not as a student, but as a teacher. And from today, I would be a third year.

Part 2

Now then, before I talk about my first day as a third year, I'd better talk about something that happened a little earlier.

It's about the day Roxy became a teacher.

-- A few months ago --

It is about a week after we had returned. The various commotions have started to calm down, and this happened while I was relaxing in the living room...

Roxy suddenly begins to speak.

"Rudi, I was thinking of working at the Magic University but, is that okay with you?"

"Eh?"

I didn't get it, so I ask again, and when I do, Roxy looks down at me and speaks in her usual neutral expression.

"Recently, I've found that I have way too much free time, so I was wondering if there wasn't something I could do."

"Umm... So that would be teaching at the Magic University?"

"Yes. That's the plan."

Roxy nods quietly. Roxy certainly does seem to have been free recently.

Roxy's ability to do housework isn't that high. Roxy is a solo adventurer, and she can get by on her own. However, if you compare her to Sylphy, Aisha, or Lilia, she's completely inferior. Because our house has two maids, Roxy doesn't get a turn to show what she can do.

As for what she does help out with, it's basically limited to helping me out in place of my left hand. Living with only one hand has a lot of varied inconveniences. Being helped out with changing or eating, and the like, really is a huge help. However, that's it.

"Hmm..."

A teacher, huh? I know the joys of being taught by her. If I had to add on an additional comment, she isn't something that exists to act as my left hand. I have no reason to

refuse. Rather than the sense of superiority I get from keeping her to myself, it's much more important to me to let the world know just how wonderful Roxy is.

"Though a person like you, Rudi, might be thinking that someone like me becoming a teacher is completely ridiculous, I think I like teaching people."

"I don't think it's ridiculous at all!"

It's unthinkable. No matter what kind of parallel world you travel to, you'll never find a version of me that thinks of it as ridiculous. No matter how many worlds you travel to, it's destiny for me to respect Roxy. It's the will of Steins;Gate.^[5]

"I think you should definitely become a teacher there, Roxy!"

"Though I'm grateful that you say that, it's a bit, um, embarrassing, huh."

All right. Since we've decided on it, let's finish it in one go.

"Shall we go speak to Vice Principal Jinas now?"

When I say that, Roxy makes a surprised expression.

"Eh, Jinas-san is the Vice Principal now?"

"Are you acquainted?"

Roxy is making a truly disgusted expression.

"...He's my Shisho."

Oh? Was Jinas Water Saint Ranked? Though, I have thought he was Fire Saint Ranked, it seems I misunderstood, huh. No, even if you can use two types, they don't call you double, twin, or anything. It's likely that, though I didn't know it, Jinas could use Water Saint Ranked magic, as well.

"In the past, I said some things before parting with him. Though, I've reflected on my youthful indiscretions..."

"If it's something that happened in the past, then, it'll be fine."

According to what Roxy says, her Shisho is someone haughty and overbearing. But, the Jinas that I know gives off a strong image of being a diligent corporate worker. The Jinas I know doesn't match with the Shisho in the past that Roxy mentions.

"But, what if, when I meet him, he still has a grudge?"

"I'll get rid of the grudge and, if it isn't fixed, then I'll have him forget it."

Though, I owe Jinas for various things, this is for Roxy's sake. It isn't a problem to me, even if I add on a few more debts to it.

"Well, when the time comes, I'll be relying on you."

And so we decide to head to the Magic University.

Part 3

As usual, Jinas is buried in a mountain of paperwork.

"My..."

Seeing Roxy, Vice Principal Jinas makes a bitter smile. Though he's a person who always makes such wry smiles, today's is particularly bitter.

"Excuse me, Vice Principal. Would it be possible for you to spare me a few minutes?"

"Yes, of course Rudeus-san. Shall we talk elsewhere?"

Though Jinas is probably busy, he willingly spares me the time. Though Jinas always seems busy, when I ask favors of him, he always spares me the time. He's not a bad person.

We move to the interview room. It's been a while since I've been here: probably not since the time I dueled with Badigadi.

"Please sit."

Roxy and I sit next to each other, in front of Jinas.

"First of all... it's been a while, hasn't it, Roxy?"

"Yes. It's been a while... Shisho."

"That you wouldn't call me Shisho anymore was something you'd already decided, wasn't it?"

At those words, Roxy answers with her eyes cast down.

"I'm sorry about that. I was conceited in those days too."

"I'm the same. I, too, had too much pride."

The two bow to each other.

I don't know what kind of exchanges they had in the past. But, the flow of time probably washed it away. More than 10 years have passed, and people do change. After a few seconds, Jinas composes himself and raises his head.

"So, what do you need of me on this day?"

"Shisho. Since then, various things have happened, and having learnt the joys of teaching others, I was thinking that it might be good to become a teacher here."

"I see. That Roxy, who had said that teachers and the like were unnecessary, has changed quite a bit, hasn't she?"

With a bitter smile, Jinas speaks words full of irony. I wonder if he isn't enthused. Whilst wondering this, I look towards Roxy and find that she's also smiling bitterly. It seems that they came to some understanding through their wry smiles.

What is this? I suddenly feel kind of left out. I have planned on selling Roxy to Jinas, had he been against it, but I get the feeling that it'll be fine, even if I don't do so. On the contrary, I wonder if I'm getting in their way.

"Roxy-sensei. Would it be better if I stepped out for a little?"

"...Eh? It's fine even if you stay, you know?"

"I was thinking I'd show my face at an acquaintance's place, you see."

Since Roxy and Jinas are old acquaintances, they probably have a lot of things to talk about. And as for Roxy, she probably doesn't want me to hear about her green days very much.

Whilst feeling a little lonely, I inform her of my destination and leave.

Part 4

I head to Zanoba's research room.

It was half a year ago that I told him I'd return in two years. Zanoba will surely be surprised.

I'm sad about Paul and Zenith. But, I have no intention of involving Zanoba in this. I'll proceed cheerfully.

"Alright!"

I knock on the door. Without waiting for a reply, I enter.

"Big news, Zanoba! He's like, totally back!"

"Fah-!?"

With an expression filled with ecstasy, Zanoba is leaning in on a life-sized mannequin.

"..."

"..."

After a few seconds, I meet eyes with Zanoba. I wonder what Zanoba is feeling at the moment. I know that he isn't feeling 'like' or 'hate'. I know this very well.

"..."

I avert my eyes, and shut the door.

Rustling and clanking sounds are coming from inside the room. I wait for about 10 seconds until the sounds stop. I then hear a [Come in.] coming from inside the room, and throw open the door with a 'bang'.

"Big news, Zanoba! He's like, totally back!"

"Ohhhhhhhh! Is it not Shisho!?"

Zanoba and I act like nothing happened, and hug each other happily. We do so without reserve. Zanoba and I are friends. I saw nothing. Nothing happened.

"You've returned quite quickly. I had heard that it would take 2 years."

"Well, a lot happened and I returned earlier than expected."

"To come back in half a year from a journey that should've taken two years is... As expected of Shisho!"

I look around the surroundings. Dolls and bronze statues with ethnic feels are lined up. Though, I'm used to Zanoba's research room, perhaps, it's because I haven't been here in a while, but it feels extremely nostalgic. Still, in the short time that I haven't seen it, the number of things in the room has increased. In particular, the top of Julie's desk is packed with clay figures. It seems that, though I wasn't here, she didn't slack off and continued to work hard.

"What are Julie and Ginger doing?"

"The two are presently out shopping, and because they've reserved something that isn't in stock except during the evenings, they probably won't be back until evening."

I see, so that's why he was having a tryst with his lover, the doll. Since it was such a rare occasion, I wonder if I've done something bad.

"Oh? Shisho, what happened to your arm...?"

Zanoba suddenly notices my left arm. With a darkened expression, he's looking at my arm that has nothing from the wrist down.

"A bit happened. I messed up."

"...Was it an enemy strong enough to take one of your arms, Shisho?"

"It was a Hydra that was immune to magic."

"A Hydra. Hm, quite the monster, huh."

Zanoba has his hand to his chin and thinks over something. Thinking about it, what we lacked was pure physical attack power. Had Zanoba been with us, we might have brought down the Hydra more easily. It's too late to talk about it now, though.

"If it was immune to magic, then it was probably a tough fight for Shisho as well."

"Yeah. Not only that, even if you cut off its necks it would just regenerate. It was really hard."

"Hohh, to even be able to regenerate... How did you kill it?"

"Father... Our swordsman cut off its necks, and I scorched them."

"I see. I understand it now. The idea to scorch its wounds was Shisho's idea, wasn't it?"

"I'd just heard a story of a similar situation."

When I think about that battle, a sigh escapes me. Despite knowing how to take care of it, we ended up in such a state. The more I'm praised about it, the more miserable I feel.

"You're looking quite depressed."

"Though we managed to beat it, we lost a lot."

"Ah, I see."

Zanoba looks at my hand and seems to nod in assent.

"Since that is the case, this is perfect timing."

With a happy smile, Zanoba moves to the head work desk. He's searching the lowest drawer with rustling noises.

"Please look at this."

What he produces from the drawer is a model of a hand. No, that's not it. For a hand, the shape is a bit off. Its appearance is not unlike that of a gauntlet. Is it a model of a glove?

"What's that?"

"Huhu, it is the result of this half year."

"Ohh?"

"It is not as if I have been playing around."

Zanoba speaks while suppressing a laugh.

Hugging his dolls wasn't playing around, huh? No, that never happened. I didn't see a thing.

"So, just what is this?"

"Right, please have a look!"

With a face overflowing with confidence, he holds up the glove model, makes a fist, and thrusts into it. He then chants.

" 『Oh Earth, become thine Arm.』 "

The moment Zanoba speaks those words, the glove model twitches. Though, the hand is clenched into a fist, it begins to unclench itself slowly. Moving between a fist and an open hand; and its fingers bent one by one. Each of those movements is shockingly smooth.

"It's a magic tool hand, that moves as you wish."

"..."

"As Shisho instructed, I researched that doll's hand and with Cliff's cooperation, was able to arrive at this success."

"..."

"Shisho...? Shisho?"

"Y-, yeah. Sorry."

I am speechless due to shock. Certainly, I had told him to focus his research on the hands first, but... To think that he'd create something like this.

"It's amazing. Frankly, I'm shocked."

"Huhuhu, it's too early to be shocked. After all, if you use this magic tool, you can even restrain my power."

"Really?"

"Yes."

Zanoba's eyes narrow and he has profound emotion. Happiness seeps from that expression of his. Being able to restrain his curse of superhuman strength means that he'd be able to create dolls.

Like this, he'd be able to create the things he loved.

By his own hands.

I probably can't even imagine how happy he is.

" 『Oh Arm, return to Earth.』 "

At Zanoba's words, the movement disappears from the glove, like an on and off function.

"Well then."

Zanoba holds out the magic tool to me.

"Here, please try it. After putting it on, when you chant 『Oh Earth, become mine Arm.』 , it will become your arm. When taking it off, it should be fine to chant 『Oh Arm, return to Earth』 ."

"Right."

As told, I put my left arm into the magic tool. My arm is handless. It might have been because it was clenched into a fist, but there was too much room inside, and it felt like it'd fall off at any minute.

"It seems like it'll fall off."

"There's no problem. Please try the chant."

"Yeah... 『Oh Earth, become thine Arm.』"

The moment I said that, mana is drawn from my arm. It isn't a huge amount. Since Zanoba can use it too, that's obvious.

"Oh-."

The next moment, the inside of the magic tool clings firmly to my stump. The feeling of being clung to slowly fades. At the same time, I can feel my 'fingers'.

"...How is it?"

I try moving my left hand. I open it up, and then clench it. Starting from my thumb, I clench my fingers in turn. This boneless hand of earth moves as if it is my own.



"It moves. It moves!"

"There's still more. Please try touching something."

"Alright."

I try picking up a carved wooden figure that was lying nearby. It's a figure of a horse, about the size of a fist. My sense of feeling is a little dull, and also hard. It feels almost like wearing work gloves. But, there's a feeling of having my fingertips touch something.

"This is amazing. You even went as far as putting the sense of touch into the fingertips?"

"Yes. If you couldn't feel anything, you wouldn't be able to make dolls."

Yeah. You'd need to be able to adjust finely your strength. If Zanoba created this glove with that purpose in mind, this would be something he wouldn't settle for.

I try using magic with my fingertips as a test. I made a water bullet about the side of my pinky. It seems that somehow this glove won't hinder the use of magic.

He was able to make this in half a year? Even though it shouldn't have been easy... I wonder if this is a case of, 'what one likes, one will do well'.

"I did not know if it would work without a hand, but it seems there are no problems, huh?"

"Yeah, it moves. There's feeling in it too."

"The more mana you put into it, the stronger it will get."

"Ohh."

"But if Shisho puts all his power into it, it might be the hand that breaks, huh. I had made it to be stronger than a person's hand, but please, take care."

"Let's see, let's see."

Hearing this, I try putting my mana into it. Very quickly, the weight of the wooden horse seems to disappear.

"Amazing."

The moment I say this, a 'CRACK' sounds from inside my hand.

"Ah."

"AAAH!"

The horse figure's leg has completely broken.

"Ah, ahhh... Shisho..."

Zanoba glares at me reproachfully.

"Sorry, I'll compensate you..."

"Uuu... This horse figure was... created by the traditional craft of the extinct Giara Dukedom... A second one, probably wouldn't..."

"I-, if you'd like, I'll create you a new one. It'd be made from earth magic, though."

When I say that, Zanoba's face suddenly broadens into a smile.

"Ohh! It seems that I've pressed you into doing so. My sincere apologies."

Despite saying this, Zanoba places the figure inside the desk. I wonder if he's going to glue it back together with bonding agent. I pray that he'll be able to do it well.

Zanoba turns to face me again and speaks.

"Please take the hand. After all, though it is still a prototype, it should be better than nothing."

"Is that really alright?"

"If Shisho and Cliff help me, then I should be able to produce something similar in no time after all."

Well, he does plan on continuing his research after all. I want the feeling of touch to get even sharper. If it does, I should even be able rub boobs with it.

Not only that, either. This arm is something that widens my dreams. For example... Right, it'd be interesting if I could attach modifications to it. It'd be handy for figurine creations if I turned my fingertips into drills. It might also be interesting to have a gun nozzle type thing that I could shoot magic bullets out of.

"...Zanoba, this is an amazing invention."

"Right? Though I may say this myself, I can boast that I've created something amazing."

It wouldn't only have uses as weaponry or for doll creation either. You can even use it for medical treatment.

In this world, even if you get a limb chopped off, with high-level healing magic, you can stick it right back on. Wounds that you'd have no choice but to seek medical treatment for in my previous world can be easily healed with Elementary Ranked healing magic.

I don't know if it's because of this, but I've never really seen things like prosthetic arms or legs. Even if you look, you'll only find things like Captain Ahab's wooden pole leg.

If you completely lose something, it'll be hard to treat. People who can use a high enough level of healing magic to regrow arms are few. If you went to the Holy Kingdom of Milis, you'd probably be able to find some. However, it'd likely to cost a lot of money to rely on them for that.

If you sold this magic tool to those types of rich people, you'd probably make money. Though it'd be a loss for the healing experts of Milis, we're on the opposite sides of the world, and if we used the Magic University or the Magic guild, I feel that it might work out.

No, it would work out.

"What's this magic tool called?"

"I haven't named it yet. Neither I nor Cliff are very good at naming things."

"Is that so?"

But it'd be boring to leave it nameless, like this.

"Shisho, won't you name it for me?"

"Eh, yeah, it's fine if you want."

It's not like I'm great at naming things either, though. But if I'm asked, then I can't say no. I look at the arm that's become part of myself, and think.

Since it's a detachable arm, there's something that immediately comes to mind.

Rocket Punch, or something.

But it's not like my arm can fly off or anything. Though I wonder if I can make it fly off...

A simple name like [Hand of Glory] also comes to mind. As in the saponified wax from the hand of an executed criminal. It has nothing to do with a bandana'd, jeans-wearing, perverted high schooler.^[6]

Well, let's stop with those sorts of names. This is the first of its kind in this world. That's why it'll be fine just to use the creator's name.

"How about if we use parts from the names Zanoba and Cliff and name it 『Zariff's Prosthetic Hand』 ?"

"Shisho's name isn't in it though."

"That's fine. I didn't have anything to do with it, after all."

"...I don't think that was the case, but... I understand. In that case, that makes this hand the 『Zariff's Prosthetic Hand』 Prototype 01 then, doesn't it?"

Zanoba speaks happily.

Like this, my arm becomes equipped with the magic tool 『Zariff's Prosthetic Hand』 . Though it's not as dexterous as my real hand, nor is the feeling as sharp, it does move as I want, and the feeling is there. There's also a huge difference in power, once I put mana into it. Though fine-tuning the strength of it will take some practice, I'll probably get used to it. As for my goal, it would probably be to gently rub Sylphy and Roxy's breasts, I guess.

"Though, I think there are still many points that require improvement, I must advance my research in automatons. What will you do?"

"Let's see..."

It seems there are a few problems. For example, the consumption of mana. It seems that with Zanoba's mana capacity, he'll be out of it after 2 or 3 hours of use. Among the other problems are that the fingers are too fat and unrefined, for example, or that the sense of touch is a little dull. If those types of problems can be fixed, I'm sure that it would be the completion of something amazing. However, in the end, this is just a byproduct of research.

Our goal is to create a moving doll. This glove would sell well, it'd be convenient to have, and one day, we'd also be able to sell it for real, but taking too long on this project probably wouldn't be good.

"No, in the end, our goal is to create a moving doll. You musn't forget this."

"That's true."

"That's why, please put this to the side for the moment, and continue your analysis of the doll."

"I thought Shisho would say that."

Zanoba and I renew our plan of action. The hand is something we'll do on the side.

Part 5

After that, Zanoba and I speak for a while. The contents of our conversation are to do with the dolls I saw on the Begaritto continent. When he hears about the matter of the glass dolls, Zanoba's eyes begin to sparkle.

"Speaking of which, how's Julie?"

"The other day, Julie completed a doll of a certain personage. She probably wanted to meet you and show you."

Mu.

Is it finished? The Ruijerd doll, that is. I want to see it. I want to see it, but...

"I see. But if she'll be coming back in the evening, I don't know if we'll be able to meet."

"Hmm, do you have plans?"

"After Sensei's interview, I plan on showing my face at a few other's places."

"Sensei?"

At that moment, there was a knock at the door.

"Rudi, are you here? It was here, right?"

It's Roxy's voice. It seems that while Zanoba and I were talking, the interview finished.

"Please come in. I was just thinking of talking about you, Sensei."

"Please excuse me."

While turning her head and looking about, Roxy enters the room, a little hunched over in hesitation. She then slowly walks over to my side.

"This is quite the splendid research room, isn't it? I wonder if it's okay for me to enter. It seems like this is something that outsiders shouldn't see, after all."

"A place that you, Roxy-sensei, shouldn't enter doesn't exist in this school."

"Isn't that just something that you've decided on yourself, Rudi?"

"That's true. But this place is fine."

When I said that, Zanoba stiffens. He's trembling.

"Zanoba, let me introduce you. She's Roxy M. Greyrat, my sensei."

"It's been a while, Zanoba-dono. That you seem to be in good health is most important."

Roxy bows very deeply to Zanoba.

"O-, o-, o..."

Seeing Roxy, Zanoba trembles all over. He brings his trembling hands to the top of his head.

"UOOOOOOOOHHHHHHH!"

"Wah-!"

Zanoba suddenly lets out a war cry. He jumps up like a frog and then lands, prostrated, on all fours. Roxy trembles with a start, and half-hides behind me.

"It has been a long time, Roxy-dono! Without knowing that you were Shisho's shisho, I've been unthinkably rude to you!"

"Please raise your head, for a prince of a country to, to me, it's too much, what if someone sees!?"

Roxy's behavior looks quite suspicious. I guess there's no choice. Should I help her out?

"It's okay, Sensei. If there's anyone who complains, I'll take care of them."

"Are you saying ridiculous things too, Rudi!?"

Roxy is going [awa awa] in a fluster, even though there's nothing for her to get flustered about.

"I should be asking you to calm down, Sensei. Isn't it obvious that Zanoba would prostrate himself before you, Sensei?"

"I-, is that so? Could I hear the reason why?"

"Hey, Zanoba. It's natural, right?"

When I look to Zanoba for agreement, still prostrated on the ground, he agrees with me.

"Yes. For she is Shisho's shisho."

See? Zanoba is saying so, too.

"Don't just say [It's obvious], but please tell me the reason!"

"There's no such thing as a reason when it comes to obvious things. It's fine for you to just calmly accept it as it is, Sensei."

"However..."

"It can't be helped, huh. Zanoba, please stand."

Since our conversation won't progress like this, I have Zanoba stand. Because Zanoba's tall, right now, he can probably see Roxy's hair whorl. He's pretty haughty, standing above her. Well, whatever. It's not like he means to be tall.

"So how was it? Does it seem you'll be employed as a teacher?"

"Yes, thankfully Jinas-shisho... Vice Principal Jinas acknowledged my ability."

"Since you raised me, that's natural huh."

"Since you grew all on your own, I don't think it had anything to do with my ability as a teacher though."

Anyhow, it seems that it's been decided that Roxy will become a teacher at this school starting from next semester. This is something that needs to be celebrated, huh.

Celebration. Celebration, huh?

Roxy's wedding celebration.

My younger sisters' tenth birthday celebrations.

My soon to be born child's birthday celebration.

Should I have one big family celebration in the future? Paul's letter has mentioned having a big celebration once we returned, after all.

Well, that's for the future. Right now, we're busy, so we'll worry about it after various things calm down first.

"Ah, that's right. It wouldn't do if I didn't greet other people as well, huh?"

"That's right. I'm sure everyone else will be surprised that Shisho has come back."

Zanoba laughs happily. Stringing along, I laugh as well. Since I'm looking forward to introducing Roxy to the others, it can't be helped that I smile.

"Well then, Zanoba, thanks for the arm. I'll come again."

"Yes, when you're free again, please show your face here. Julie will be happy as well, after all."

"Of course."

"If the condition of the arm gets bad, then it might be faster to show Cliff rather than me."

"Got it."

Like that, I part from Zanoba.

Part 6

Grinding sound rings out through the cold hallway.

It's the sound of my prosthetic arm. Whilst walking, I'm adjusting the amount of mana I put into it to see how much would be best. Each time I clench and unclench it, my prosthetic arm makes a grinding sound. It seems that as expected of a prototype model, there isn't a way to keep it quiet.

"Is that prosthetic arm a magic tool?"

Roxy who is walking on my left suddenly asks me a question.

"Yeah. It's the result of Zanoba's research."

"That's amazing, isn't it? For it to move so precisely."

"That's true. If I can move this easily, then it seems I'll manage even without your assistance, Roxy."

"Ah-... That's, true."

When I look at her, I find that Roxy is making the face she does when she blunders.

"I'm sorry. I didn't really consider you, Rudi. Even though it'd be hard for you when I'm not around, I went and became a teacher..."

"If it's about my left arm, then you don't have anything to worry about, Roxy."

Though it'd help me, it's not as if I am asking her to do it. It's obvious that what Roxy wants to do comes first. Since it seems that she wants to help me out in place of my arm, I didn't say anything, but there are a lot of people around me who are willing to help me when I'm troubled after all.

"Anyway, it's great, isn't it? That you've gotten a left hand."

"Yeah, with this, I can touch you as much as I want, Roxy."

Whilst saying so, I tap Roxy's shoulder with my prosthetic hand. Roxy's warmth and softness is transmitted from under her robe. It seems that this can tell temperature apart, as well. It's high performance, huh, this hand of mine?

"Anyway, I want to introduce you to everyone, so please follow me."

"Introduce... yes!"

Roxy nods with a nervous expression.

After that, we go to places one by one, report my return, and introduce Roxy.

Rinia, Pursena.

Ariel, Luke.

Then, Nanahoshi.

Though, I have thought to go to Cliff's place, there are sultry sounds coming from inside his research room, so I pass on it.

Each person's response was varied.

Rinia and Pursena's responses were particularly interesting. With just a sniff of Roxy's scent, the two of them started to shiver. To the two of them, who had rounded their tails, I told them that this is the Shisho that I revered and loved. When I did, the two of them bowed their head to Roxy together. It's probably because the Beast Race is sensitive to such matters; this is a person they absolutely couldn't go against, for real.

On the other hand, Ariel and Luke were dull to it. When I went to greet them after my repatriation, they said something sarcastic like [You're showing your face after returning, I see.] Though I say this, it wasn't in a blaming tone. However, it was because they had assisted me a lot for my journey. Having messed up due to lack of preparations, I felt nothing but shame. That's why I apologized.

But well, that's fine. When I introduced Roxy, after giving a blank look, the two of them then looked at each other. They couldn't believe that someone as young looking as Roxy would be teaching. However, I guess it's as expected of the princess of a country. Ariel politely greeted Roxy. She's a capable person.

Nanahoshi was ill looking. It might have been that she had caught a cold, but whilst coughing, she looked at my face, and said, [With this, we'll be able to continue the research, huh] and sighed in relief. When I introduced Roxy and said that she'd be working as a teacher starting next year, she just replied with a curt [Cool.] but because she was much too curt, I went on to list Roxy's good points at length, she replied, [Pedo. Gross.] and frowned. Well, a common high school girl wouldn't be able to understand Roxy's greatness, I guess.

Part 7

We'd finished greeting everyone related to us. When it is about time to head home, Roxy pouts.

"Rudi."

"What is it?"

"Though I'm happy that you introduced me, I feel that you're overestimating me a little too much."

"That's not the case."

"Really?"

"Since your wonderfulness can't be expressed in words by someone like me, that much wasn't enough, you see."

When I say this, Roxy swiftly points a finger at me.

"Right, right! Could it be that you're making fun of me, Rudi?"

"That's ridiculous. I always seriously hold you in esteem, Sensei."

"Hahhh, somehow each time you call me 『Sensei』, it feels like nothing but you making fun of me, Rudi."

Roxy lets out a massive sigh. Though it's a proper evaluation in my eyes, it seems that Roxy sees it as excessive.

"Leaving that aside, though you introduced me in a lot of ways, and even said that I was your 『sensei』, you never said that I was your 『wife』 did you?"

"Ah-"

At those words, I realize my mistake.

It's a mistake that can't be taken back.

Right. Roxy isn't Roxy Migurdia anymore.

She's Roxy M. Greyrat.

I introduced her as such and Roxy also referred to herself as such. That's why I had thought that it was unnecessary. Ariel should've understood what it meant. But she didn't voice any complaints, and I thought she had understood, but...

But I see. That's right. What a thing I've done. Because Roxy is someone amazing, I thought she was wasted on becoming my wife, but I see, she wanted to be introduced as my wife, huh? Though she's a second wife, she's still a wife. She's someone who might even give birth to my child.

"I'm sorry Roxy, my sweetheart. But I really do love you. If it suits you, I'm fine with travelling to your parents' place and reporting our marriage to them, Roxy."

"Uu, no, there's no need. It's far, so let's do so one day in the future."

In the future, huh? I wonder if Robin-san and Rokari-san are doing well. Having married Roxy, those two are like my parents, as well. I owe them from that time as well, so I want to go see them. If we went through a few of those teleport circles, it feels like we'd be able to get there in about 2 months, but...

"I understand. In that case, one day in the future."

I guess it's fine, for now. One day, when we have enough time, we should all go travelling together as a family.

Whilst I entertain such thoughts, we return home.

9 Rumors of the School - Number 1

"The Banchou's arm flies."

CHAPTER 2

THIRD YEAR STUDENT

Part 1

First day as a third year student,

When I wake up and come down to the living room, Sylphy is there.
She's giving Lucy breast milk.

"Go, good morning, Rudi."

"Good morning, Sylphy."

It has been months since the child has been born, the progress after birth is all right.
Mother and child are healthy.

Lately, Sylphy is becoming more ladylike, I think.
Is it because her hair is growing or because of giving birth to a child?
Or is it because the experience of twenty years is piling up?
She's in the process of becoming a beautiful woman, just like a Hollywood actress.
Her figure without doing anything, just silently sitting, is surely a prize beyond other's reach, to the degree of making others hesitate to call her.
Practically, I'm relieved that, she's still my Sylphy when I call or flatter her.

"Lucy is also energetic today."

I look at Lucy.
Lucy is wholeheartedly clinging to Sylphy's breasts.
Just like me last night.
In this side, parent and child are the same, uh huh.

Lucy is a healthy but docile child.
Different from brother or sister, my own child seems to be special.

Every time something happened, illness or something uncertain, I had overwhelming anxiety enveloping me.

But the child seems to be healthy.

Looking at Lucy's state, Lilia says something that surprised me,

"I recall times when Rudeus-sama is small."

Reincarnated person,

Those words are running in my mind.

I was a no-good person in my previous world.

Because of that, I'm a little uneasy.

I suspect whether this child is the reincarnation of some kind of bad man.

Because of uneasiness, I've asked my daughter in Japanese and English whether some crime transpired in her past life. ^[7]

Instantly, after my daughter was born facing her,

I said something like, [You should realize, right? This is a different world.]

[You are my sunshine! I am a pen!]^[8], figure of parent who is whispering.

It's humorous, right?

Aisha who is looking at my figure from the shadows was giggling and laughing.

I have no proof, but I think Lucy is not a reincarnated person.

While laughing at hearing my words, she replies nothing but some words like "Aba~" and "Abu~",

It's possible that she is hiding it, but not many adults can mimic a baby.

Even if that's the case, someone who desperately mimics a baby is not cute.

But, Lucy is cute.

To the extent I'm not bored being close to the crib.

I don't care anymore about reincarnated or not.

Even if Lucy's soul is reincarnated, I will just raise her very carefully.

Just like how Paul raised me.

"Today also, my child is cute."

"You're right. I wonder why she's becoming so cute."

"It's because her mom is cute, right?"

From behind Sylphy, I turn my hand around Sylphy's head and hug her.

I pretend I'm kissing around the back of her head, to feign burying my face into her hair.

The gentle scent is the scent of milk.
It's a natural perfume.

"Ehehe, thanks, Rudi,"

Sylphy while rubbing my hand, laughs while embarrassed.
Then, I see Roxy standing behind me.

"Mm, Roxy. How about yesterday's Rudi?"

Roxy is shivering.

"Eh, ah... That, I received it well."

"Though Rudi became rough when such a thing happened, were you not scared?"

"No, it's not scary. It's the second time, and Rudi was gentle too... Then, I'm sorry."

"There's nothing to apologize for."

"Is that so..."

"That is so."

Both of them are still awkward, but not strained.

A good balance is being preserved.

I can see the intention of them becoming friendly.

Something like the relation of three people, must be started and consist of three people's effort.

Particularly, I caused Sylphy trouble.

"Fo~od~, fo~od~, it's~ break~fast~?"

There's Aisha, who arrives to the living room while singing a song.

The song sucks.

She is probably improvising.

The genius Aisha seems to have no talent for singing.

"Good morning, madams of Onii-chan! Today's breakfast is same as usual, it's generally the same!"

I see green soup and white bread.

Then, Aisha had prepared warmed horse milk.

In this area, so milk can properly come out, mothers who give birth to a child are given horse milk.

"Aisha, without being reluctant, explain the content of breakfast."

The one who entered from behind Aisha is Lilia.

She seemed to be in the kitchen again too.

"Wide bean, sweet potato soup, and wheat bread. And then horse milk full of nutrition."

In response to the words, Aisha explains the breakfast proudly.

Of course, I knew what it was- even if I did not hear her- because it's what I eat every breakfast.

However, such a thing will be important as a tradition, too.

"Good. Then, wait a minute."

Lilia nods contentedly and enters the second floor.

"Sorry to keep you waiting."

She comes down immediately with Zenith.

When Zenith is in the living room, she stops and stares at me.

Then, she sits in her seat silently.

"Good morning, mother..."

Several months passed, Zenith's memory has not returned.

But she changes little by little.

Particularly, it is remarkable seeing her show different actions when she's with Norn. It's like dealing with a two or three year old child, such a feeling.

After all, to her daughter, there are things to think about.

I wonder: will her memories return little by little?

Probably, it's better to see the situation a bit longer.

"Then, let's eat."

We eat breakfast together.

On my right is Sylphy; on my left is Roxy.

On the side across the table, lined up are Aisha, Lilia, and Zenith.

If Norn were here, she would sit down next to Zenith.

Although I do not remember particularly deciding her seat, it became such custom.

"From today, I'm at school too, and so I entrust Lucy to you."

"Yes, Mrs. Sylphiette. Leave it to me."

Both Sylphy and I return to school today.

I'm in my third year and Sylphy is in her sixth year.

While I went to school, I left the child care to Lilia and Aisha.

However, Lucy is still an infant.

She cannot live without the breast of mom.

In that sense, I'm an infant too, but I put that thought aside for now.

Anyway, I employed a nurse.

She's a neighboring woman called Suzanne: a mother of two and a former adventurer as well.

She's my acquaintance, but about this person, let's put her aside for now.

"Thank you for the delicious meal."

Now it's time for school.

Part 2

"Osu!"

"Good morning!"

"Thank you for the work!"

"Good day, boss!"

Some unknown people greet me when I enter the school site.

There are only trashy guys. ^[9]

Did something like a bit dignified presence come out from me?

Well, this is also because I became a father.

I'm not very aware of this.

"What's upppp!!!!" ^[10]

Just when I think about that, the most trashy person greets me. ^[11]

"Boss, good morning nya."

"Morning to Fitts and Mrs. Roxy, too nano."

It's Rinia and Pursena.

Even when these people became seniors, they didn't change much.

Rinia is insolent. Pursena is biting on some meat like ham.

"From morning, boss is accompanied by two ladies going to school, such a good position nya."

"Discarding us and bringing two people, fakku nano."

"Because we graduate this year, we must find someone nya."

"That is right. Duel this year, find partner, and then return to hometown nano."

I feel proud.

Apparently, I, who is blessed with flowers in both hands, am enviable.

Not Sylphy or Roxy, but me, the man:

Boss of the School,

It's the symptoms of a new leader sickness.

"Do your best, both of you."

Even Sylphy is laughing.
She also comes to say.
That is the smile of someone who has a man.
Sylphy and the both of them are distant, but have a degree of frankness.

"I'm sorry, I seemed to cut in."

However, Roxy seems to receive the words at face value.
Facing the two of them, she lowers her head.

"Nya!?"
"Wha!?"

Then Rinia and Pursena panic.

"Ah, it's not like that nya. I didn't mean it like that nya."
"Tha, that's right, it means our charm was, fakku nano, I didn't intend to speak ill to Mrs. Roxy."

Both of them apologize.
Since Roxy is an existence that should be respected so it is necessary –no, it's a bit unpleasant.
If it's these guys alone when seeing Roxy, they will say something like [We are better than this shorty nya!] or [Fuck Magic tribe nano!]
I will not forgive those kind of words.

"Fitts must have it hard, but do your best nya!"
"Though outclassed, if it's Fitts, you can do it nano!"

After apologizing for a while, both of them clap Sylphy's shoulder.

"Eh?"
"It's better to teach the second person soon nya."
"Establish your position at the top nano."
"About what?"

Sylphy gives it some thoughts.
Then she notices with, "Ah," then looks embarrassed.

"Um, does Rudi love me properly?"

Rinia and Pursena, do imitation "Gusu" sounds with their noses.

"She is brave nya."

"It's touching. Because Fitts is not standing out, she's the unfortunate type, so if the harem increases by three or four more girls, she'll gradually be ignored nano."

They're saying whatever they like.

I don't intend to marry three or four more wives. Even if it happened, I don't intend to ignore Sylphy.

I do not intend to neglect Sylphy, who has helped me with her body.

In Roxy's case, it might give her a bad experience.

"Eh, that wouldn't happen... Right? Rudi?"

Behind the sunglasses, her expression cannot be seen.

But, the voice seems to be uneasy.

Inside her heart, Sylphy may also be uneasy.

I must reassure her.

"Of course,"

I hug Sylphy.

I whisper out [Love] while patting her back.

It would be better if I say it clearly in front of people.

"I love Sylphy!"

After I declare it, applause arises in large quantities from all around.

Sylphy becomes bright red in my arm.

"No, wai-, Rudi. Stop saying such a thing at school."

"Although, you're the one who asked-"

"Th-then say the same thing to Roxy too."

When I see her, Roxy is looking up at me.

"No... Don't mind me."

A look full of expectations,
I hug Roxy with my left arm without hesitation.
Roxy at my left arm, Sylphy at my right arm,
Ah, great- flowers in both hands.

"I love both of them!"

After I say that, some students boo.

They are probably Milis Church believers after all.
It's fine. I have a different religion after all.
I will not interfere too.

However, having attracted public attention, Sylphy's face is bright red.

"La, later. I will go ahead to Ariel's place."
"Yeah, see you again at lunch break, Sylphy."
"At school, it's Fitts!"

Come to think of it, was it such a rule?
Because I didn't go to school for nearly one year, I forgot it.
I think, isn't it fine because her male appearance is already gone?
Even if anyone looks, he or she will only see a beautiful woman in men's clothes.
No, even in men's clothes, she's still lovely.

"I will also go to the staff room."

After ascertaining that Sylphy runs off, Roxy also separates from me.

"Yes, see you, Roxy."
"Ah, at school, make sure to properly call me teacher."

Is it about not mixing public and private affairs?
I understand.
But it is so; Roxy is also a female teacher from today.
Female teacher,
It has a nice ring to it. I recall the deed from last night.
I wonder if I can rent out the gym storeroom to do it for hours...

Incidentally then I notice something.

"Well... Roxy-sensei,"

"What is it, Rudeus-kun?"

Roxy looks up at me with a neat face.

"Because today is the first day, the teachers may be doing a morning gathering."

"Ah!"

Roxy cries out after doing a blunder.

Her face is deep blue.

"So, sorry. I should hurry!"

Roxy runs in a fluster to the staff room.

She seems to misunderstand the schedule a bit.

It's natural, I think.

It should not be possible for a student and teacher's schedules to synchronize.

"Then, we should go too."

"Nya."

"I'll accompany nano."

I aim for the classroom, with a cat and a dog as my attendants.

Today is homeroom day.

Although the wives are gone, there are new flowers in both my hands.

Am I popular?

But I will not lay my hands on Rinia and Pursena.

Fufu, it's tough being a man.

"By the way, I heard a rumor nya."

Suddenly Rinia points her ears at me.

Her eyes are overflowing with curiosity.

"Rumor?"

"Yes nya. A rumor that boss fought a powerful enemy to the extent of losing his left hand nya."

"Is that so..."

That reminds me; I only told them about the return report and Roxy becoming a teacher.

The only one who heard the detailed report is Zanoba.

Did that guy leak it to someone?

No, maybe Cliff heard it from Elinalise.

"As expected from boss nya- Going to Magic Continent, battling against the Seven Major Powers, and then reaching for victory at the sacrifice of just his left hand!"

"Huh?!"

What is this?

Seven Major Powers?

Where did such scary words come from?

"Moreover, the opponent is running away while confused. As expected nano."

"Wa-wa-wa, wait a minute."

What is this?

What kind of rumor has this level of exaggeration?

Please stop with these kinds of things.

Moreover, about this rumor, how should I respond about one-sidedly winning against the Seven Major Powers, alone?

What should I do if the real Seven Major Powers overhear?

If Orsted overhears....

"So, that's what we think about boss's story now nya, now is the time to spread it at great scale- gyaaa!"

I grab Rinia's tail and pull it with all of my strength.

After that comes scratches from extending nails, which I avoid with my demon eye,

Then Rinia holds her tail with tears and glares.

"What are you doing with a maiden's tail nya!"

I glare back.

"Don't spread rumors with such exaggerated story."

"Eh!? Ah, so, sorry nya,"

These people have previous criminal records with these rumors.

First crime was spreading that I had ED.

Well, that's OK.

The source is a certain truth. ^[12]

But, this time it's different.

This is harmful.

At worst, death,

It's a dangerous rumor.

"We heard it from Zanoba nano."

Pursena suddenly adds,

"Boss was battling against a Hydra resistant to magic nano. [If I followed Shisho, then his great left hand should not be lost.]"

"That is right nya. But, we just couldn't think it was great enough nya. Because of that, we want to spread boss's greatness more..."

"That is not your concern."

Certainly, I became a little stronger.

However, at the end, when the time matters, thoughtlessly I failed; I'm a useless man. I don't desire to receive an evaluation that high.

"But even if we do nothing, when someone sees boss's left hand, many kinds of rumor will spread nano."

"That's right nya, even if we say different things, nothing will happen."

"..."

Seems that I am the number one celebrity at this school, it cannot be helped if there's such rumors.

But please stop with the Seven Major Powers rumor.

That time when Orsted nearly killed me, I remember it every day.

"What kind of other rumors are there?"

"Yes nya, there are a few more nya."

Let's hear them all.

"Battling against the Supard Tribe,"

Checked.

"Stopping flocks of one million monsters, alone."

Checked.

"Succeeded in ancient magic but hand was lost in reaction."

It seems like many unfounded rumors are flowing.

I think the absurd rumors will disappear soon.

"Hmm..."

Think about it, about the Seven Major Powers, I ought to be familiar with that rumor.

The number one celebrity- winning or losing- will be a source of rumors.

I should not worry about rumors spreading a bit at school.

"So- sorry about the tail."

"Human race doesn't know about this pain nya. Pulling a maiden's tail is unforgivable nya."

"Next time, I'll treat you to fish."

"Yeah, lucky day! Sometimes making a mistake is fine nya."

"I would like red meat nano."

I move to the classroom while talking with Rinia and Pursena.

Part 3

Homeroom was just like usual.

Five people sit sparingly with me in the center:

Zanoba, who was tampering with a doll,

Julie, who was imitating him,

Rinia, who was hand filing her nails, ^[13]

Pursena, who was eating meat,

And Cliff, who was opening a book and in the middle of studying.

Standing behind him is Ginger; don't mind her.

I have gotten very used to this scene.

I never thought that in one year, two of them would stop being here.

Rinia and Pursena will graduate this year.

Well, there's still one year.

One year will be gone in an instant.

"Which reminds me, Rudeus."

Suddenly Cliff raises his face from the book,

"Would you come to my place for greetings?"

He looks dissatisfied.

That reminds me that I did not meet Cliff for several months after I came home.

Today is the first time.

"Sorry Cliff-senpai. When I visited, it looked like you were busy with Elinalise. So I restrained myself. "

"Well, I was surely together for a while with Lize. Yes, it's unavoidable like that. It's also my fault."

Cliff says so and withdraws.

However, Ariel is like that too; people around here would not mind much if it's just a short greeting.

In case of adventurers, it is even shorter.

"However, you should have let me know when your child was born. Although I'm still in training, even so, I'll pray for you."

"Is that so..."

"Yeah, sorry. Since you're not a Milis believer, so prayer is not needed? But recently it's like you're avoiding me. Even if you're busy with child parenting, isn't it fine if you visit me in the laboratory sometimes? You have the time for that, right?"

Now that it's said, I might be avoiding him.

There is a reason for not wanting to meet Cliff.

Needless to say, it's about Roxy.

I have two wives and Cliff is a Milis believer.

He won't be happy.

"Or, was there a reason that you did not want to see me? I want to hear it from you, if there is such a reason."

Today, Cliff is very stubborn.

Probably, he heard the details from Elinalise.

But, it's also about Elinalise.

[It's something that cannot be forgiven by religion, but if it's forgiven, then the vessel named Cliff looks great to me.]

I might say such a thing.

Needless to say, it's not necessary to have Cliff's permission to marry Roxy.

However, it's unamusing if that becomes discord with Cliff.

For now, let's try dancing on Elinalise's palm.

I will say it; Cliff will forgive me.

If he forgives me, then I'll praise his generosity.

Cliff will feel good.

Nobody loses.

All right, I'm a dancer. Dancing and singing and say it:

"As a matter of fact..." "Excuse me."

And the classroom's door open interrupting my voice.

The ones who enter are two people.
The teacher, who is always in charge of the homeroom session,
What is his name again?
Oh well.

A pretty girl enters after him,
With a robed figure, sleepy eyes, blunt expression and a little nervous,
It is a child that seemed to do her best, any time.
It is a child whom I want to hug unintentionally.
I mean, it's Roxy.

"Everyone, I introduce the one who will be the class teacher who is in charge of special students."
"I'm Roxy M. Greyrat."

After she steps forward, she lowers her head.
Zanoba and the others watch her with dumbfounded eyes.
The class teacher continues his words without regard to us.

"Though her tribe's figure looks youthful, even so, her age is around fifty. Because she has a connection with people in this class, she will be taking over this classroom. For a while, she'll be an assistant homeroom teacher, but from next year on, she'll formally be the homeroom teacher, so everyone, too, in that regard-"
"Nya! What will happen to Samson-sensei?!"

The class teacher nods [Yes] when Rinia asks that.
It seems like the class teacher's name is Samson-sensei.
It's macho but not gay.
He's a person whose characteristic is having no characteristics.

"I will return to my hometown next year, because I have no relatives in this class anymore."
"That reminds me, where did Ren-senpai go?"
"My little sister entered the magic knight group at Neris Dukedom. She seems to be fine. However, I don't know what kind of mess she'll make if I leave her alone."
"Is that so nya?"

I came to know about this later.

Originally, the one who was in charge of homeroom at the special student's class was a person who had a special relationship with the special students.

It may be because many special students are quirky.

It is desirable that the classroom teacher is a person that can be the reins or shackle.

The current classroom teacher, Samson-sensei seems to be a relative to the person who was replaced by Cliff when she graduated.

That alumna had a prominent magic sense and is part of the royal family of one of the countries of the Magic Triumvirate, the Neris Dukedom.

Rinia and Pursena were greatly indebted to her.

Anyway, Roxy who has relation with me and Zanoba seems to be the ideal candidate. Roxy steps forward, looks around, and says,

"I think I have been introduced to many of you already, though. My name is Roxy M. Greyrat. The second wife of Rudeus Greyrat who is sitting over there. Although the contact is different between student and teacher, I thank you in advance."

"..."

Cliff is offended.

He surely wanted to hear the words [second wife] from my mouth.

Then he would have accepted Roxy.

However, the plan has been destroyed.

"Well... Cliff-senpai,"

"Hoo, a second wife. Do you not have what's called integrity?"

A sermon begins after I talked,

"Yes. I think I have insufficient integrity."

"That day, I gave my blessing because you said to love only Sylphy, though?"

"Yes, I'm very thankful for that time."

"Of course, I will say nothing else because I know you're not a Milis believer. No, I should congratulate you instead. Congratulations."

"Thank you."

Cliff makes a 'sniff' sound with his nose. ^[14]

"I sometimes meet your little sister at the town's church. She said that she would find a spouse and become intimate like brother and Sylphy-neesan in the future. What did she say to you, who brought the second wife home?"

"She was angry."

"Of course, she prayed for you and her father's safe return almost every day. She was very glad that you lived and came home truly."

"But in the end, she forgave me."

"Of course, she forgives you in the end. She would be thrown out if she objects till the end."

"I will never throw her out, though..."

"Of course you wouldn't do so. However, you wouldn't know that if you stood in the shoes of a weak girl, right? She, who lost her father, has only you as someone to depend on. I wonder if you guys should have considered Norn's feelings a bit more."

"Yes."

"It's not a good thing to marry too many partners, since women are not a collection."

My ears hurt.

Still, he is just like a Catholic priest.

Today's Cliff gives off an intimidating feeling.

"Yes... Well, Cliff-senpai."

"What is it, Rudeus?"

I'll give thanks because I got some information that I never heard before.

"For playing with Norn, thank you."

"I only accompanied her because I saw her at church... Oh, and don't let such a small child go alone. Though this neighborhood is safe, there are kidnappings if you enter back alleys."

"Yes, I will remember that."

"All right. I will forgive your sins, if you reflect, since Lord Milis is a generous Lord."

"Yes, thank you."

I was forgiven.

After all, was this a kind of confession?

However, my follow up with Norn was surely insufficient.

From now on, I will be twice as kind.

"Well then the talk is over, the matter of communicating--"

By the time Cliff's sermon was over, Samson-sensei resumes the homeroom. Standing next to him, Roxy is showing an expression like she wants to run away. She laughs a little and scolds me when I throw a kiss to her.

Part 4

The flow after isn't very different from how it used to be.

I look at Zanoba and Cliff's condition, help Nanahoshi, research the absorption magic stones on my vacant times, and write a book.

As usual, there are many things to do.

I feel nostalgia for the old days, when I only did one or two things a day.

There are some changes in the after school when the lesson finishes.

Before it was time to give lessons to Norn, and now it's to teach her swordplay.

I am anxious that if I teach her swordplay, her grades will decline.

Because she declared that she will do her best, let's watch the situation for now.

She should do it rapidly while there is motivation.

About those things, I will leave them for now.

When the class was over, I go to meet Sylphy and Roxy then go home with the three of us.

When Sylphy has night duty, it's only Roxy.

When Roxy has prolonged staff meetings, I'm alone.

There's also times when I go home with Norn.

Today, I'm pairing with Sylphy.

I'm holding hands and talking about many things with Sylphy while walking home.

Mainly, it's about school.

At new school terms, it's said that the Student Council looks for new members.

"Rudi should enter too."

"I have no time for that."

After saying that, I return home while flirting moderately.

"I'm home."

When I return home, Aisha hugs me.

"Welcome back Onii-chan, would you like dinner? A bath? Or... me?"

Where did she learn those words?

No, I taught her.

But, I didn't teach it to Aisha.

I taught it to Sylphy.

First, I say [Me] then tickle her on her underarms, she cackles while running away and Lilia targets her head.

Afterwards is a bath.

Though Aisha put bath in her choices, the bath was not prepared.

She is also still cooking the meal.

Ultimately, there was no choice besides [Me.]

Well, that's fine.

Fortunately, Aisha cleaned the bath at noon.

I only fill the water, so I finish preparing promptly.

I often prefer taking a bath with someone.

Somewhere along the line "enter the bath in pairs whenever possible" became an unspoken house rule.

What kind of country would have this kind of rule?

Well, it's fine.

Today, I take a bath with Aisha.

Though Aisha is already eleven years old, she is frank, and does not have enough shyness.

If I talk about this to a young man in the middle of puberty, it will be misunderstood instantly.

"Aisha, please cover your front with cloth."

"Why?"

"It is modest."

"Yes."

For modesty and shyness examples, I think Aisha should follow Norn.

Younger sisters are truly something good.

Aisha crams herself between my legs as I wash her body.
The way she asks me to wash her hair or her back is really cute.
If I could be aroused by her, I would probably suggest making her my third wife, creating a hell-like situation.^[15]

I would have exceeded my patience limit if Sylphy or Roxy did the same thing.
Although, in their cases, it can be said that it's not necessary to endure.

Anyways, it's a heartwarming contact time with my younger sister.
While washing her body, I hear the events of the day from her:
That Lucy was cute.
That she was concerned about Zenith.
That Lilia slept at the window.
That she planted a new plant at the garden grounds.
They were trifling stories.

Oh yes, I gave the Begaritto rice seeds to Aisha and asked if she was able to cultivate them.
She replied reliably, [I'll try to plant it after it becomes a little warmer.]
If it's left to the genius Aisha, she'll let me eat rice eventually.
I'll look forward to it.

"I'm back."

After I get out of the bath, Roxy comes home and is having dinner at her own discretion.
Today's dinner is stew of river fish, bread, beans, and potatoes.
In short: as usual.

"Thank you for the dinner."

After the meal, Sylphy gives milk to Lucy.
Lucy is a child that is docile but eats well.
Will she gain weight in the future?
I don't want Sylphy's daughter to be stretched to the side.
When she grows up, I'll make her exercise. Yes.

After dinner finishes, I spend time while being in a relaxed mood.
I teach Aisha magic; Roxy is preparing for tomorrow's class in her room.

Sylphy is cuddling with Lucy, but sometimes trains her magic as well.
I may mind when Jiro, the armadillo, comes to visit.
By the way, the one who takes care of Jiro is Aisha.
Aisha trained Jiro well and it is becoming a faithful servant-like watchdog.

"Well then, please excuse me. Good night."
"Good night."

Zenith and Lilia go to sleep early.
Aisha too is early, she sleeps after finishing studying.

"Well then... Sylphy."

After everyone fell asleep,
I invite the wife to the bedroom.

"Yes..."

Sylphy picks up the hem of my clothes, blushing.
When she does such a movement, I'm already at my limit.
I lift her with a princess-carry and carry her to the bedroom.

And it's time for a dazzling nighttime.

After being satisfied in heart and body, I sleep fast hugging the body of my small-sized wife.

Part 5

Before I fully sleep:

I wait until my wife has fallen asleep; I walk out from the bed.

The destination is the basement.

Tiptoeing down the stairs,

After glancing back at the stairs, I open the secret basement door.

There's the altar that is concealing something.

It's enshrining objects of divinity.

That cloth and that cloth, ^[16]

They're tools to worship God.

I also pray calmly today.

9 Rumors of the School - Number 2

"The Bancho's eyes glow."

CHAPTER 3

TRAINING WITH NORN

Part 1

One month has passed. Though it's still cold, the snow is starting to melt, and the ground is beginning to reveal itself.

Morning.

I get out of bed slowly so as not to wake up Sylphy who is sleeping beside me. Because Sylphy likes to use my arm as a pillow, I need to take care when freeing my arm.

In the neighboring room I change into my training wear. I'm wearing something like a jersey that Sylphy picked out. Though it's a little cold to wear in the winter, once I start moving it's perfect.

Once I'm done changing, I pick up the stone sword that was left in the corner of the room. This misshapen stone sword is something I created with magic. It doesn't have a blade, but it's heavy, so it's perfect for my powerful prosthetic hand.

Since it's a practice sword, should I give it a fish name? Tuna or Marlin or something? Come to think of it, I haven't had sashimi since coming to this world, huh. I wonder if they don't have a culture of eating raw fish.

Now that I'm done preparing, I say goodbye to Sylphy. I stroke her head once.

"Mhuhu..."

When I do, Sylphy nuzzles her head against my hand with a satisfied smile. She's probably half-asleep. How cute.

I happen to notice that the blanket is overturned. Since her pantied butt is visible, I stroke there once as well. Despite having given birth, it's a small butt. Elinalise's figure is good as well; the Elven race sure is an amazing one.

Whilst thinking about such things, I grab the blanket and put it back in place. Though our 'nightlife' has begun again recently, since it'd be tough if Sylphy suddenly had to bear a second child, we keep things in moderation. Even so, if she gets pregnant then she gets pregnant, and there isn't much we can do. This is also a natural part of life.

"Nn uu...you later..."

I hear her voice when I am leaving the room.
Yeah, see you later.

Where I'm headed to is Norn's room. Lately, we've been training together in the morning. When Norn is staying at our house, we train in the garden, and when Norn is staying at the dorms, I go meet her at the school courtyard. Today is one of the days she is staying with us.

"Norn, are you ready?"

I knock the door and open it.

"Ah, Nii-sa——"

"Oops, excuse me."

Since she's in the middle of changing, I close the door.

Norn's body is still young. Though I'm fine with both young and matured bodies, I'm not aroused by my sisters. Though it's a little bit of a shame, I'm relieved. To love someone without lust really is a special feeling.

However, when I consider that this sister of mine will one day become someone's woman, feelings of gloominess start to sprout. Is this what they call the heart of a father?

It's not bad. I'll do this in place of Paul. In place of Paul, I'll take on the duty of saying 『I won't hand Norn over to a no-name, shady bastard like you.』

"Geez, after knocking please wait for my answer."

Whilst I was thinking about such things, Norn comes out with sword in hand, wearing gym clothing. She's wearing a long sleeved top and long pants that aren't erotic at all. It's the gym uniform designated by the Magic University. I bought it at the university and gave it to her as a gift.

When I happen to peer into her room, I notice that Paul's sword is hung up high on the wall. Though in my previous life I would've left a framed photograph of him in the butsudan, there are no photos in this world. If you search earnestly you might find a magic tool that takes pictures, but normally it isn't possible. That's why the articles of the deceased are used in place of a butsudan.^[17]

"Norn, do you mind if I enter your room for a little?"

"Eh? It's fine I guess?"

I enter with permission. When I do, I find that Norn's scent fills the room. It's a scent particular to bedrooms in the morning. Nearby is a bed with ruffled sheets. If I dived into it and sniffed it, I'd probably get nothing but Norn. I won't do so though.

I stand in front of Paul's sword and bring my hands together.

"Tou-san. Today I'm going to practice the sword with Norn. Please watch over us so that nothing serious happens to us."

With that, I bow. What would Paul say? That getting wounded has value? Or, would he tell me not to injure Norn?

I happen to look at her and find that she's on her knees with her hands clasped together, in the style of the Milis faith.

"Shall we go, then?"

"Yes, please take care of me today as well."

Stretching exercises. Running. Practice swings. Even if I say 'sword practice', right now we're doing nothing but building up her fundamentals. These past few months, Norn has been strictly building up her foundation.

Though I say 'strictly', the training menu that I use would crush Norn. That's why we're starting with a fifth of the harshness of mine. Since Norn is still 10, it wouldn't be physically possible anyway. If I suddenly force too much on her, all that'll achieve is ruining her body. While I have Norn do practice swings in the garden, I'm finishing off my own weight training.

"Twenty-five...! Twenty-six...!"

It's a monotonous type of training, and because of that it's simple and easy to get tired of, but Norn still hasn't complained to this day. It's something that makes me happy.

"—Fifty!"

"Alright, well done."

"Haa... haa... Thank you for instructing me!"^[18]

After the training is done, I get in the bath with Norn and we clean up. Because Norn fell over a lot during the running practice, places like her knees are wounded and bruised. I apply healing magic to those places. It's 'pain, pain, go away' magic for my little sister.

It seems that for some reason Norn doesn't want me to see her naked, so she wears panties and a thin shirt. It's probably puberty. Aisha gets naked at the drop of a hat so I want to have her follow Norn's example.

I take this into account as well and put on pants before washing myself. Still, if I told her that there are guys who get aroused from seeing shirts become transparent from water, what kind of face would she make, I wonder? Though I kind of want to see, I won't say it. It'd be lonely if she stopped bathing with me. It'd be tough if she thought of her Onii-chan as a pervert.

"Today was nothing but practice swings again, huh?"

While I'm thinking about such things, Norn brings her mouth into a pout.

"When will I be allowed to learn swordsmanship?"

"Aren't you already learning it?"

"Not just practice swings, but forms and techniques too."

I've been teaching Norn how to run properly and how to do practice swings. Running and practice swings. They're ways to build up her body and her muscles. Without a strong body and strong muscles there's no point in learning the forms and techniques. That was why I did so.

"...You're right."

I wonder if her body's gotten strong enough these last few months.

Thinking this, I look at Norn. Her small body is in its growth phase. I wonder if her limbs are more muscular than compared to when we first started.

It's still difficult to say that her body is strong enough. But I get the feeling that she's strong enough not to hurt herself. It might be about time to teach her the first form.

"You're right. Then after class today, the real stuff begins."

"...! Yes!"

While having this conversation, we leave the bathroom.

Part 2

It's the evening.

The location is near the Magic University.

'The Third External Training Ground'————— Frankly speaking, it's just a sports ground, and we're standing in one of its corners. We're wearing our usual training wear for ease of movement.

In front of me stands Norn. She's wearing the same gym uniform as I am. With a sword in hand, her mouth is shut tight and she wears a serious expression.

Though they were few, there are people in the surroundings. Robed students engaged in self-practice, and students who were simply taking a stroll. There were also bystanders who were wondering what we were doing wearing our gym uniform at such an hour. It doesn't matter even if we're seen though.

"Norn. Today we'll start real sword training."

"Yes."

Norn replies with energy. Her expression is filled with expectation. She is overflowing with the desire to start learning techniques already. Though it was just for a few months, doing nothing but basics training was probably tough on Norn. However, neither wielding a sword nor battling is a game. Whatever you're doing, the basics are important.

"I'm telling you now, but I intend on being strict."

"Yes."



Norn nods seriously.

"You might come to hate me as things progress. You might think [Onii-chan is being this tough because he hates me]. That's how strict I intend on being."

"Yes."

"To be frank, it'll be tough being hated. However, remember that crude knowledge gives birth to grave injury. If you die because I was half-assed in teaching you, I won't be able to face Tou-san in heaven."

Norn has no talent for the sword. I knew Eris when she was ten, and Norn has no such talent. She probably isn't very far behind the average person. However, strength is something relative. In battle the stronger person will win, and the weaker one will lose. Losing will probably mean losing your life, so it isn't some trifling matter. So that Norn can win against most people, it'll be necessary for her to put in effort, for her to undergo harsh training, and for us to put effort into coming up with some method to help her win.

"At some point, a day may come when, because it's harsh, because you can't do it well, and because some genius surpasses you, you'll want to just give up."

"..."

"I can understand this kind of feeling as well. I won't condemn those who give up on their goals because of these kind of feelings."

"..."

Norn's mouth purses into a ㇏. From her perspective, I might seem like a superman overflowing with talent. She might be wondering what business a person like me has spouting out such words. Certainly, this body of mine is filled with talent. However, there are various people I lost to. There have been times when I've almost died as well. As much as possible, I'd like to avoid seeing those eyes on the verge of death.

"But absolutely never give up on the sword. If you ever abandon it, I won't teach you a second time, and I absolutely won't let you use Tou-san's sword."

"..."

"As long as you don't give up, I'll absolutely never give up on teaching you, either."

I wonder if I was believable. In the first place, I wonder if I myself followed the advice, I just gave. No, though I gave up on becoming strong through the sword, I still train in the sword every day. It shouldn't be a case of being blind to my own shortcomings.

"Understand?"

"Yes! Please take care of me!"

Norn replies with energy. Blood rushes to her cheeks, and she looks up at me with a face full of determination. I wonder if this is how Paul felt when he saw me as a child. If that's the case, it means that one day Norn might part from my hands and go searching for another Shisho as well. Once she's a fine Elementary Ranked swordsman, it might be good to call Ghyslaine. I don't know where she is though. To the west is a land called the Holy Land of Swords. If I put out a request, perhaps someone of about Sword Saint will come.

"Very well. Well then, let's start with running."

"Eh? Weren't we going to do training with a sword?"

"Yeah, of course. You'll be running with sword in hand. On the battlefield you'll always have your sword in hand, after all."

"..."

"And your reply!?"

"Yes!"

On the menu today is running, the three basics forms, and then free sparring with me. I intend to teach her, first of all, that swordsmanship is something frightening. That it's frightening and painful.

[They won't remember unless it hurts] isn't what I'm aiming for.^[19] It's just that I think that I have to let her know about the pain and fear from the start.

Perhaps Norn will end up crying. I might end up making her hate me in one go. However, I have to steel myself and do it. When it comes to these things, it's no good just to keep having nothing but fun. If you have nothing but fun, one day, you might find yourself dying helplessly.

"Alright, follow me!"

"Yes!"

While feeling a little uneasy, I start to run.

Part 3

"Alright, that's enough for today!"

"T-, thank you for instructing me..."^[20]

Under the dazzling evening sun, Norn is collapsed on the ground, breathing wildly.

"Tomorrow in the morning, or lunch or whatever is fine; while I'm not around, repeatedly practice the forms you learnt today."

"Y-, yes."

The first day's practice goes acceptably. After returning from running, I teach her forms. After that, we have a proper spar with wooden swords. While we are doing so, I correct things like her footwork or her stance.

If it were the kendo from my old world, they probably would've done various other things. But there are no rules in this world, and when it comes to fighting, real experience is better. Paul had also started knocking me down from an early stage. Ghyslaine, as well, focused on meeting swords. That's why this method shouldn't be wrong.

However, Norn couldn't help but be averse to hitting people with a wooden sword. That's why, first of all, to get rid of that resistance, I have Norn freely hit me. While avoiding strikes to vital areas, I just stand there and let her hit me without defending. Norn grimaces at the sensation passed from her sword to her hands, so I face her with a pose that says, [I'm fine, even if I'm hit.] Because of her practice swings over these last few months, her strikes have a certain weight behind them. As a result, I end up with a lot of dark red bruises.

After that, we spar as planned. I knock Norn down, and our training ends for the day. Of course, I go easy on her. But even so, she should have a lot of bruises on her limbs. To bruise that cute little sister of mine, I wonder if this is really the right thing to do. However, Norn swung her sword at me until the end. Without crying or complaining. As long as she's that determined, everything will work out as a positive. That's what I want to believe.

"How was it, Norn? Did it hurt?"

"...No, please look after me tomorrow, as well."

"Alright."

Honestly, I have no confidence in my own teaching methods. If magic is like academics, then swordsmanship is like magic. I'm sure I'm not doing it correctly. However, if I don't continue this, then it won't get better.

"Come here, I'll apply healing magic."

I sit Norn down and apply healing magic to her. If she's injured in places I can't see, should I have Sylphy heal her? Since she's coming home with me today, I could have her get in the bath together with me and heal her then. Thinking this, I approach Norn and take off her jacket when I suddenly sense a presence.

"Mn?"

When I turn my head, I find that standing in the light of the evening are a number of male students looking our way. I wonder how long they're been there for. Thinking back on things, they might have been there from the start. Though I thought they were just curious onlookers, for them to have stayed gathered there, for so long, might mean that they have some other reason for being there. Do you have some business with me?

"Norn. Go get changed first and wait for me. Let's go home together today."

"Eh? Ah, yes. I understand."

After quickly healing Norn, I have her hurry off to the changing room. I then approach the men.

Though I had thought there were just a few of them, when I near them I realize that they numbered in the double digits. Going by their faces, all of them seem unpopular. Though I'm already a riajuu^[21] with two wives, I have no intention of looking down on them. They're the same as I was in my past life.

As I get close to them, they send looks filled with hostility my way. When I stare right back at them, they avert their eyes. What the heck is with them, anyway?

"Do you need something, or?"

When I ask them this, they all look at each other. Asking each other in small voices what they should do, and then pushing each other forward. Eventually, one man steps forward. He's probably about 18, huh? His height is around mine, and he gives a kind of lanky and unhealthy feeling. He has a slightly bad attitude, and his cheekbones protrude. He gives a really magician-ey feeling. Were Zanoba to wear glasses, he might

resemble them. However, Zanoba is inexplicably overflowing with confidence. What these guys are overflowing with are insecurities.

He glares at me and opens his mouth.

"Why are you bullying Norn?"

"...Mn?"

Bullying. Hearing this unpleasant word, I can tell that my eyebrows come together in a frown. Seeing my face, he trembles with a start. However, he continues his words.

"Certainly Norn-chan is a dunce, and she fails often. Her failures may have rubbed you the wrong way. But she's always giving it her all. Was there really a need to hurt her to that extent?"

[That's right, that's right.] goes the audience.

"In the first place, Norn doesn't do stuff like swordsmanship. Even though she doesn't, for you to force her to pick up a sword... No matter what happened, isn't that going too far?"

[That's right! That's right!] goes the audience.

"Hmm."

If I consider what's been said so far, it seems that they think that I forced Norn to pick up a sword, and using swordsmanship practice as a cover, I beat her to my heart's content. Though it's regrettable, that might really be how it looked from the outside. My way of teaching her probably wasn't that great either, after all. Anyway, I'd better clear up this misunderstanding.

"That was——"

"We know that you're the strongest in the school. But if you're going to treat Norn-chan cruelly, we'll fight to protect her."

Speaks the vanguard, with a voice filled with determination.

But the surrounding voices that say [That's right, that's right] are quieter this time. On the contrary, I could hear small voices saying, [No, going as far as to him is...]
...That's right. There's something I have to do before clearing up the misunderstanding.

"In the first place, who are you people?"

"Eh!?"

The men start raising their voices in chaos, and turn away from me to face each other. When they turn around to face me again, they ask me a question with troubled expressions.

"What do you mean by who?"

"What relation do you have to my sister?"

"W-, well, since Norn-chan was a first year, she's always been trying her best, and we've always been watching her. Thinking stuff like [Do your best] and wanting to help her, we—"

The man's reply is flustered and incoherent. When he seems about to continue, the other starts speaking out as well.

"Half a year ago I noticed her and—"

"We had practice together, but she kept failing in fire magic and—"

"I saw her being scolded by the teacher during magic drills, and I saw her crying, and I unconsciously—"

Their words are clumsy and unskilled. But, I am able to understand them.

They are a group that noticed Norn in places like class and drills, and seeing the teary-eyed Norn, felt warm and the like, and casually tried to help her out. In other words, they are 'that'.

They are a fan club.

Come to think of it, I think I've heard about this kind of thing from Sylphy. Well, Norn is cute after all. I can understand their feelings. I hope they'll continue to look after my little sister.

"I see. I understand now. You've always been taking care of my little sister. I'm her brother, Rudeus Greyrat."

"EEHH!?"

They are stunned by my deep bow.

They're Norn's followers. Among them might be certain extremists and stalkers. However, the majority of them purely wish to help her. In that case, as her brother I should properly pay my respects.

However, that's its own issue. I still have to solve the misunderstanding.

"There's something I want to talk about. The sword training just now may certainly have been strict. However, leaving other things aside, swordsmanship is something that you lay your life on——"

I start to explain. That Norn is the one who had brought up swordsmanship. That I thought having half-hearted resolution would've been dangerous. That Norn has no choice but to put in more effort than others do.

Though they were bewildered at the start, they understand what I am saying. There are also a bunch who say, [For it to be necessary to hit Norn-chan that hard...] Of course, I don't think that my methods are absolutely correct or anything. Anyway, it's fine as long as they don't harbor a grudge against me or anything.

When I continue my explanation, all of them behave themselves. Since things are as I said, they assent. Though they're still young, they're already considered adults in this world. It seems they understand just how harsh battles are.

"Nii-san, what's going on?"

Norn comes back. On top of her usual blazer is a poncho-like winterwear.

"Ahh-, it's Norn-chan."

"Norn-chan! You're adorable today too!"

"You've worked hard, Norn-chan!"

The moment Norn comes, the members of the fan club suddenly becomes grosser. However, it's not like I can't understand their feelings. The appearance of Norn with a poncho over her blazer is adorable. There's no doubt about this. It's a cuteness that makes you want to have her hold a leaf umbrella.

"Ah, senpai... Hello."^[22]

Norn trembles with a start and bows her head. However, she doesn't come too close. As expected, she can sense this weird atmosphere.

"N-, Nii-san. I've forgotten something in my room, so I'm going to go head it. Please wait for me at the school gate."

As though she suddenly remembers something, Norn says this and heads towards the dorms. On the way, she trips and falls with a thump.

"Kuh..."

Norn slowly gets up. She then sneaks a glance our way. For an instant, a light could be seen in her eyes.

Seriously... There's no helping her. It's because she ran after taking that much damage to her body. When we get home, I'll give her a massage so that her muscle ache doesn't get too bad. She should take a long soak in the bath and get rid of her fatigue, too.

"...Ahh, Norn-chan is so cute..."

"If she gives her all in running, we'll see up her skirt."

"Though I thought that it had to be the school uniform, that outfit is nice too, huh..."

"But her running is slow, huh."

"That's right, huh. If she gets targeted by kidnappers or something, she mightn't be able to outrun them."

"If Norn-chan becomes a slave, I'll buy her."

"A lifestyle with just Norn-chan and I... Haa... Haa..."

Mn. If Norn becomes a slave, you'd definitely buy her, huh. Then you'd let her eat as much as she wanted. Her face, after eating her fill but forcing herself not to waste the remainders, would...

Ha-! Not good, not good. That's not it! Norn is my little sister. As if I'd let her become a slave. If someone abducts Norn, even if I have to tear the grass out of the ground, I'll find the guy who did it and beat the shit out of him. If Norn becomes a slave, I'll track down the guy who bought her and fuck him up.

"Ahem!"

"Ha-!"

When I clear my throat, the fan club whose delusions are running wild, come back to their senses.

"I'd like it if you didn't look at my sister with such strange eyes."

"S-, sorry."

"Well, Norn is cute though, so I won't mind if you keep it to watching her from afar, immersing yourself in delusions or whatever."

"I-, is that so?"

A relaxed atmosphere spreads through the place.

"But don't think I'll leave you alone if you lay your hands on her for real."

"Hii-"

Just to make sure, I give them a warning. For now, it doesn't seem like there are any guys who plan on doing anything cheeky, and after all, these kind of organizations won't allow their members to get ahead of each other. But you never know what obsessed people are capable of, after all. Someone might even suddenly snap, and attack Norn.

"Speaking of which, what are the rules of your club?"

"Eh? Club? Rules?"

"Right. According to the rules of your club, how much contact with Norn is okay?"

This is something important. For example, with idol fan clubs, essentially contact with them is forbidden, but cases like handshakes are okay. At those times, there are also guys who stick weird things to their palms. Gum for example, or sea urchin for example. You'd want to make everyone promise to wash their hands properly before a handshake event.

Or so I was thinking, but...

"Fan club?"

"Mn?"

I sense a discrepancy in our conversation. The reaction towards words like 'fan club' and 'rules' is wrong. Proper fan clubs usually have clearly defined rules. Could it be that though they're club members, they don't know about them?

"Please wait a moment. Who's the one in charge of this group?"

"In charge...? No, there's no one like that..."

"...What do you mean? Please explain."

I try asking for the details. When I do, I realize a strange truth. It seems that this group wasn't something that someone came up with. They saw Norn's cuteness and naturally grouped together. In other words, they didn't even know each other's names.

"I see."

It's an extremely dangerous situation. At any rate, a group of unknown size that thinks of Norn as cute has emerged. When people group together, they become capable of things that they wouldn't be on their own. For example, abducting the cute Norn and taking her back to their rooms. While making excuses like [It's your fault for being so cute, Norn-chan], they'd...

Outrageous!

"At this rate, a crime is going to happen."

"A crime? That's... We just..."

"There's no mistaking it. Someone will run wild and lay their hands on Norn."

When I said this, they all made a fuss.

"That's ridiculous!"

"We have no intention of doing something like laying a hand on Norn-chan!"

"That's, we like Norn-chan, but we like her as a something like a little sister..."

What'd you say, bastard? Norn is my little sister. ...No, that's not the problem right now.

"I think we need to create some rules."

In order to prevent crimes sprouting from the group, regulations are necessary. They need to decide on the rules, and watch each other to protect them. As long as people have rules, they'll abide by them. Wearing the same clothes and mufflers, and waiting together for the idol to leave, you know?

Rules are something that emerge because of history. During a group's long history, rules will be created in response to necessity. It might be because the history of this fan club is short that they haven't finished creating their rules yet.

However, it's dangerous to leave them without rules. It's a danger to Norn. I have to use this chance to make sure rules are created. It'll be too late once something happens.

At the very least, someone has to decide on them from the start. The problem is just who will be deciding. As I thought, the person who creates the group would be most suitable as a leader. However, these guys don't have such a person. The guy who came and talked to me first is surely the strongest amongst this lot. In that case, should I leave the position of leader to him and have him decide on the rules?

...Nay.

It's not suitable to leave the position of leader to a guy with no self-awareness.
Amongst those standing here, who is it that has the most self-awareness here?
Amongst those standing here, who is it that is most aware of how much they should value Norn?

"Alright!"

It's me.

Norn is my younger sister.

In other words...

———I AM the rules.

Year 425 of the Armored Dragon calendar.

At the Ranoa Magic University, a certain society was established: the Norn Greyrat Official Fan Club.

Numbering 30 members total, this group would go on to become an organization that had a great impact on the Magic University.

The name of their First Generation Chairman was undisclosed.

According to one theory, the First Generation Chairman violated the rules that he himself had set; he had gotten in the bath with Norn, and was subsequently driven from his position before the third day had passed.

His name became the shame of the organization, and was erased for eternity from the register of members.

However, the existence of the First Generation Chairman was by no means an evil one. According to that anecdote, he had brought 『Ironbound Law』 to the fan club.

Severe and strict ironbound law.

The number of those who hated these rules and left the fan club became large.

However, the result was that the fan club's sense of unity became stronger.

Their ironbound unity was of such strength, that rumors of it spread even to the Knight Orders of the Kingdom of Ranoa.

Rumors gave birth to rumors.

At some point, the leaders of the fan club became known as proper and courteous people who maintained order.

When they graduated, they were met with favorable treatment from the knight orders and magic guilds of the surrounding countries.

9 Rumors of the School - Number 3

"At the Banchou's single shout, a group of 30 people will assemble."

CHAPTER 4

WHAT I RAISED

Part 1

Let's have a talk about Aisha.

She is energetic.

With the death of Paul and the state of Zenith, she continues to pass her time energetically without changing a thing.

Rather, she seems more energetic now than she was before.

In fact, you could say she is the most energetic when she's at home.

It's nothing like the listless face seen on Lilia as she stares out the window.

Nor does she wear a painful face like Norn, who idly stares at Paul's beloved sword.

The housework is continually done as if nothing had happened.

During the day she raises the plants in the garden, and flowers in her room.

At night I privately instruct her in magic, while she fawns all over me.

There does not seem to be any mournful feeling for Paul at all from her.

For Aisha, I wonder if father's existence wasn't a very big thing?

Norn, it seems, doesn't have many memories remaining of Buina village.

So it's possible that Aisha also might not have many proper memories of Paul and Zenith as well.

For Norn, the only real length of time she spent with family was with Paul.

For Aisha, the only real length of time she spent with family was with Lilia.

When looking at it from that perspective, it's difficult for me to say that I also am properly able to mourn as well.

I think, rather than feeling sadness at the death of her Father, that her driving force is the happiness she feels just knowing that her Mother is alive and well.

"Life" to her, isn't about holding on to regrets from the disasters that have happened in her life, but rather finding a way to get the most enjoyment out the life she is able to live.

Part 2

Now, it was the morning of a certain day.

While it was a holiday for myself, unfortunately Sylphy and Roxy both had to work.

I thought about how I would spend the day leisurely, even while taking care of Lucy.

While the wives are working hard, the husband is having a rest.

Even though that seemed to give me a deplorable feeling, I rationalized that even an adult needs downtime too.

Well, as of right now, I'm not presently bringing in any income.

And it is a little hectic around here with the arrival of my baby.

But still, as for what's happening presently and also what I can see in the coming future, there aren't any money problems that I need to be concerned with.

While confirming my thoughts, I see off Sylphy and Roxy.

Then, I double-check that Lucy is asleep.

I let loose with some stretching, and head out to the garden.

At one point, the garden was dilapidated, and there were many exposed patches of bare earth.

However now, after not having seen it for a while, it had undergone a metamorphosis.

The first thing I noticed, was that three trees of the type to not wither in winter had been planted.

Each tree had a type of blossom that corresponded to one of the other seasons; spring summer and autumn.

I can only imagine how in the world each of them were brought here.

I seem to recall an inquiry on an adventurer guild request, that involved delivering something that had been uprooted from the forest.

If the transportation costs were said to be very expensive, receiving Zanoba's assistance could have lent some assistance with settling matter by way of escort costs.

[24]

Furthermore, there was place in a corner of the garden that was bricked-off.

I know of it because I helped with its creation.

In this bricked-off area, there was a paddy that had the rice seeds I brought back planted inside.

Since I didn't know how to actually make a rice paddy, the rice was being grown normally in the ground.

Presently, promising stalks have begun growing out of that paddy.

While it seems to be doing alright, as for whether or not rice will be able to be harvested, I just don't know yet.

Aisha was squatting down in front of the bricked-off rice paddy.

And curiously, Zenith was also squatting next to her.

"What are you all up to?"

"Ah, Onii-chan. We're pulling weeds!"

Pulling weeds.

This is something straight out of a Showa Era manga, isn't it?

After looking at the section for a bit, certainly Aisha has made an effort in her weeding. Even Zenith next to her is also silently pulling up weeds.

Come to think of it, that time when I lived back in Buina village, Zenith used to pass time pulling weeds like this quite naturally.

After all, pulling weeds is an integral part of gardening.

"Zenith-sama has also been something like an assistant lately."

"....."

The way she says 'Zenith-sama', leaves me feeling a bit uncomfortable.

"Umm. Aisha. About the way you refer to Mother, is it alright if you just call her 'Mama' too?"

"I can't. That's something Mama Lilia was very against. About Zenith-sama, since Zenith-sama is the proper wife, I must always respect her as such."

Lilia's orders, huh?

Strictly enforced.

However, since Aisha is unable to look at Zenith as a mother, is it a difficult matter for her?

Around the time she was born, Zenith was able to become a proper mother to Aisha after all.

Well, it's fine.

In our family, calling her that, might as well be as trivial as a nickname.

"Since when has Mama Zenith been doing this?"

"From before this was made. At first Mama Lilia stopped her when she would come out here and help me with the gardening. But she is more skillful than I am!"

That's right, back in Buina village, Zenith did do proper gardening.

Great care was given to the plants and trees in the garden.

I wonder if this behavior is influenced by how she was?

At any rate, if there is a chance she can regain any part of her memories by doing this, I have no reason to stop her.

Nevertheless, I just watch the ladies side by side pulling weeds.

The relation between those two seems quit good.

While they are not connected by blood at all.

They look like your normal mother-daughter

"Ah, I forgot. Brother, you are taking a rest today, aren't you?"

While considering things, Aisha looked back at me and spoke.

Her cheeks were dirty with mud.

"Yeah, for today, I'll be in the house."

"In that case, can you come to my room later on, I have something I want to show you."

"Sure."

I nodded while I wiped the muddy cheeks of Aisha.

Having the mud wiped away, she could only smile with a mischievous "ne he he~"

Even I had noticed that Zenith was watching the situation.

Part 3

[Because there is something I want to show you, come to my room later.]

Those were some very seductive lines.

Aisha is a precocious child.

It's very possible that she might start doing things, like abruptly lifting her skirt and saying [I want you to see all of me!]

Nope, no way.

It's all for naught, since our relations together extend into taking a bath together.

What more can you even show past that?

However, with her being so direct like that, ahh, I am worried about her future prospects.

Is it time for me to teach her Sex Ed? ^[25]

No, if it comes to that, Lilia is certain to have taught her about it.

In all possibility, the one who would be giving out the wrong knowledge about that here, would be me.

Pondering that, I enter Aisha's room.

Though I was told to come by later, I never heard exactly when 'later' was supposed to be.

I don't think she'd particularly mind if I was waiting in her room.

It's not like I have any particular interest in the room of an 11-year old girl.

Then again, it's not like I can say I don't have an interest either.

"Yeah. She is definitely able to keep her own room clean."

Aisha's room was very orderly.

All the nooks and crannies of her room have been thoroughly cleaned, and not a single thing lies scattered about.

The bed is also properly made.

At various places around the room, girl-like accessories could be seen.

For instance, on the side of the bed was a plush doll.

It was a plush doll made in the shape of a human about 20 cm tall.

Bright light brown hair made of wool, wearing a robe, and holding a staff.

Clearly a Magician.

Around here plush dolls aren't sold, did you somehow buy it from a certain peddler?
I don't get the feeling that Zanoba would have had a doll like this.
Then in that case, it's a quite the treasure.
I mean... surely something like this probably wasn't made by herself.

On the windowsill there were some potted plants.
From the seeds that I had gotten on my journey, there were some sprouts.
One like a Tulip, others like the Cactus, or Aloe.
There were about 10 different sized potted plants lined up.

Unlike that of Norn, this was indeed a girl's room.

Opening the closet in the corner of the room, three different sets of maid clothes were hanging.
All of them seemed to have been thoroughly used, and the patching stood out.
They were the apprentice maid's clothes.
As Aisha steadily grows taller, the time she has left to wear these will soon run out.
Or will Lilia mend these further with a bit of her tailoring?

While looking around near the edge of the closet, I spotted a rather cutesy and girlish set of clothes.
Something that would look rather frilly if she wore it.
'Battle Clothes' I wonder? ^[26]
If she wanted to show off something like this, then I feel a bit sorry for her.
I'll just pretend that I didn't see this.
And so, I closed the closet.

I instead went to open the drawer under the closet.
In it was a cluster of panties.
It was packed to the point of overflowing with small folded panties.
If I had any kind of 'thing' for Aisha, then certainly this spot would be Shangri-la.

Next to it was also a cluster of shirts as well.
Properly investigating, I was able to confirm a large number of brassieres as well.
Nonetheless, with my 11 year old sister's pleasant growth, she has already successfully managed to equip the chest armor.
However, isn't her size still that of an A-cup?
According to Oppai-sennin, on the subject of her 'equipment', from the very beginning Aisha was said to become a person of exceptional talent in this area.

Clink.

"!"

At that moment, I heard a sound from behind me.

I used my foresight eyes and filled my hands with magical power and looked over my shoulder.

Simultaneously, I closed the drawer, and then extended a fingertip in the direction I heard the sound.

".....Who's there!"

There was nothing.

There was no one.

Aisha and Zenith are probably still in the middle of weeding.

And Lilia should be handling lunch preparations right now.

Maybe it was Jiro the armadillo?

Wait a minute, Roxy rode Jiro to school.

He should be taking a nap in the academy stable right now.

Perhaps the horse I bought before going to Begaritto -- Mastsukaze , sometimes I check up on him in the town stables but it's unlikely for him to come all the way here on his own.

Could the noise have been Lucy?

Not possible, Lucy can barely even crawl as of yet.

Then, could it be something completely different?

A thief perhaps?

Some kind of hentai bastard whose only aim is to possess the bra, worn for the first time by a certain young girl...

I adopt a low posture, and become cautious of the surroundings.

But still, there is nobody.

There aren't any hiding places.

But my sharpened instincts tell me, that something strange is going on.

Impossible, but could it be an invisible enemy?

Using a magic item to make themselves invisible?

In that case, the effect would wear off soon.

".....So is it a test of patience then? Fine with me."

I mutter that alone.

Without anyone being here, it could be that I am an idiot and it is just the rattlings of this old house.

No. Certainly something was there.

It was an uneasy feeling.

I need to look properly.

Anything that looks different from before.

...Plush doll.

No, that's the same.

The door hasn't been opened or shut.

The bed isn't disorderly at all.

Even the ceiling is clean. I doubt even a mote of dust would fall from there.

That can only leave one thing.

The potted plants.

There you go.

The number of potted plants is different.....no that's not quite it.

There doesn't seem to have been an increase or a decrease.

However the sense of foreboding is definitely coming from here.

It was then, at that moment.

A strong light shone into the windowsill, when the sun had reappeared from behind the clouds.

Clink, Clink!

"Wha-!"

The smallest of the potted plants shook.

The plant that had been growing there began to move about in a meandering way.

Wiggling its body around so that its whole body would be absorbed in the sunlight.

Whenever the plant moved, then the pot it was planted in would move, and that was what was causing the noise.

So this little guy was the true source of the sound.

However....

"What the heck is this?"

When I timidly stuck out a finger to give it a poke, the plant twisted in a surprising way.

However, when my fingertip approached, it immediately wrapped its ivy vines slowly around it.

I hurriedly removed my finger.

And the plant, as if nothing happened, resumed its sunbathing.

"A moving plant.....?"

How strange.

Will it by chance dance as well when I sing a song?

"....."

All joking aside.

I seem to remember a plant like this.

Yeah, I've seen it many times now.

This.

This guy is...

It is a Treant!

Part 4

Anywhere you go you can find the monster called Treant.
It is a classic example of a demon that lives in this world.
Strictly speaking, it's the so-called Slime of this world.

I have also visited many places during my travels.
Demon Continent, Milis Continent, Central Continent, and Begaritto Continent.
And while I have unfortunately not yet gone to the Sky Continent, I have conquered most of the world's 5 continents.

And on every continent, there was always a species of demon Treant that existed there.

Whether in the forest, or on the plains, it appeared frequently.
While Treant is a monster of the tree, its outward appearance is not fixed.
Stone Treant looks more like a potato.
Cactus Treant looks like a cactus.

They each had various appearances.
According to a story that I heard, there is even a type called Elder Treant that is able to manipulate water.

However I have never seen such a small Treant.
This one is at most hardly smaller than 15 cm.
Maybe 20 cm if I include the root size.
It has 4 leaves and 2 vines.
Currently it has no budding flowers nor fruits.
It's still a young tree though.
For the meantime, I've decided to call this guy 『Baby Treant』 ,

Well, what the name is doesn't matter.
Just not having a name makes it inconvenient is all.

Now then, for the problem at hand.
Why is there a Baby Treant being cultivated in Aisha's room? What exactly is she doing?

"And then, what shall I do about this guy?"

"Well about that, you see, it suddenly started moving."

Aisha, without a hint of shyness, answered so.

"When was that?"

"Almost immediately around the time Onii-chan came back, so isn't it pretty amazing?"

Rather, she pridefully boasted about it!

"Yeah, it's amazing. However, why have you kept quiet about it until now?"

"I was going to tell you! However since Onii-chan looked busy all the time I postponed telling you, and Onii-chan just found it before I could tell you!"

Aisha retorted, angrily puffing out her cheeks.

Ah, she's really lovely.

However, now I understand.

This was on today's agenda.

Was it this you wanted to show me?

"So then, there was somehow a Treant seed mixed in with the ones I received....."

"Eh, that's not what I'm saying. I got it from the Asura Kingdom, it's a germ of Bacillus."

"Ah, is that..so?"

"Yes. Don't you see how there are leaves on the vines? In just a short while, it should start blooming purple-colored flowers."

A flower of the Bacillus.

I've heard the name before.

A material in aphrodisiacs.

Aside from aphrodisiacs, it is also cultivated as part of the raw materials typical in the production of perfumes.

However, why is such a flower able to become a Treant?

"This thing, exactly how did it start moving? Was it right from the start?"

"Nope. At first it didn't move at all. But then I transplanted it into the pot, and it suddenly began to move."

According to the conversation, it first germinated in her flower bed, then after a short while she transplanted it into a new pot and it started taking care of its growth. Then after she grew it a bit more carefully, she was going to return it back into the garden.

She seemed to be trying various methods of growing, and in the middle of the potting plant stage, it began to take form.

"Heh."

Plant pots are common.

Some time ago, I even went with Aisha to buy some at the general store.

Even though in all likelihood the plant pot wasn't somehow a magic item.

"You haven't done anything strange?"

"Nope. Same as all the others. I am only using the soil that Onii-chan made with magic. After all, compared to the soil around here, the soil made by Onii-chan, is very nutrient-rich."

Then, it seems it isn't a question of the soil.

I never particularly considered the effectiveness of the soil I produced with magic.

Aisha seems to be filling it with all of the feelings of love she has for me.

"Ah, also, I will occasionally give it some of the remaining bathwater."

The remaining bathwater!

So that means, in the times that it is not me, it gets to bathe mainly in the dissolved sweat droplets from my beloved Sylphy and Roxy?

And even on occasion, leftover droplets of Nanahoshi are mixed in too?

No wonder!

Then it would be no mystery at all that the plant would develop some ecchi tentacles.

No, wait, it might be strange after all.

But I can certainly understand it.

"Hmm."

After all, what exactly is the cause?

An ordinary seed being raised in an ordinary way becoming a monster.

Is it possible that something like that could have happened?

In the seeds that Aisha received, by chance had a Treant seed mixed in, that much I can grasp.

Treant are able to mimic their surroundings.

So by that process, it might not have been suspicious to choose the form of the Bacillus flower.

While I consider all of that, only one result remains coherent.

"In any case, it would probably be best to burn it to death."

"Whaaaat!?"

Aisha raised her voice hysterically when I said that.

"But why!? It took a lot of time and effort to raise it! And you don't want to do anything else but destroy it!?"

It's hard to believe.

That she was crying out such feelings.

Certainly, if I wanted to pridefully show off something, and was then told to incinerate that something, would I react similarly?

".....Aisha. Even you should be able to understand. This guy is a Treant. A monster."

"But still, right now it's just tiny and cute!?"

"Even if that's how it is now, there is the chance it can attack someone when it becomes bigger. It is dangerous!"

"But I've already been properly disciplining it to not attack people already!"

Aisha clings to my waist

And in her eyes, tears gather.

Just now, [I'll look after it properly, and I won't let it trouble anyone else I promise.] seemed to be silently conveyed.

However, it's not like a dog or a cat.

It's a Treant!

"Say, Onii-chan. I can keep it, right?"

Aisha pleads at me with upturned eyes.

"It's no good even if it's tiny and cute. Throw it away."

"Even if, this guy, isn't even in the slightest? Even if it becomes friendly with everyone else, and it properly listens to what I tell it to?"

"I know that's a lie. A Treant has no ears so how can you say that it listens to the things you tell it to?"

"Watch this."

When Aisha replied, she extended her hand towards the Baby Treant.

The vines of Baby Treant began to wind themselves around the small finger of Aisha.

When the vines had been wrapped around Aisha, she gently tickled and stroked the side of it's leaf.

While it was being petted, the Baby Treant began to wiggle its body.

It was a strange thing to see.

The plant was behaving like a domesticated animal.

"Yes, now release finger."

When Aisha said so, the vine unwound with a rustling sound, and stood up on the palm of her hand.

"Which one is the pinky?"

The vine took a moment, seemingly at a loss, then coiled itself around the pinky finger.

"And now the middle."

The vine then released the pinky, and coiled around the middle finger.

"Okay, now the thumb."

Following the words of Aisha, the vine coiled around the middle finger began working it's way over to the thumb.

However, without sufficient length, only the tip of the vine could touch the thumb.

"Good job, Release—"

Aisha and Baby Treant played in that sort of way, for a while longer.

And then she turned around and faced me.

"How's that? It listened to me properly, didn't it?"

"A- Yeah."

Certainly it was possible that those two had come to be able to understand each other. The impression I got from watching, was that the Treant had definitely taken to Aisha well.

Should I change my way of thinking just a little on this?

...even though Treant is a demon.

In my image of it, it's a ferocious demon that mimics a tree to ambush and attack travelers.

However, even though I just call it a monster, there are those that get used to people. The lizard I rode on in the Demon Continent, and even Jiro the Armadillo are also demon beasts.

However, between demon beast and demon, if I look into the origin of both, they can be called the same thing.

Is it possible for Baby Treant to be domesticated into a demon beast if it gets used to people?

If it's a matter of risk, then wouldn't keeping the larger sized Jiro be a much bigger risk?

However, Jiro was a demon beast that was trained by a professional.

"I'm more worried that in the middle of the night, it will take advantage of you being asleep and strangle you to death."

"In the case of the Bacillus flower, at best it might grow to twice its current size, so I think everything will be fine."

"But, Still..."

"Then suppose I am injured, and at that time it still obeys me!"

"By the time it would take to get back here, you might be injured beyond any repair."

"Muu.....Say, surely it's not still no good?"

Up until now, I have never heard the story of the Treant being domesticated.

I don't know its habits, nor do I know how it should be trained in the future either.

And the Treant, even though it is a small fry, it is still a demon.

If one wrong step is made, I have a feeling it could become a major incident.

Even if it only grows at most to 30 cm like Aisha said, I guess the level of incident could be known.

The Treant which has been germinated from a seedling, had been raised all the way to here.

If it was able to become accustomed to people, then it would be hard to imagine that it could cause significant harm.

Hmm.

"....."

"I get it. Even if you say it is no good, I still have a plan."

When I seemed perplexed, Aisha indignantly raised her lips.

And then, folding her arms defiantly, glared at me with her upturned eyes.

"A plan?"

"I'll just talk to Sylphy-ane and Roxy-ane, about 'that thing.'"

"That thing?"

It sounded like I would be met with something troublesome.

To the perplexed me, Aisha arrogantly declared.

"Why, the hidden room in the basement!"

"-!"

There are certain parts to people you shouldn't mess with.

For me, that happens to be the basement altar.

When everyone is fast asleep, that is the sacred place I secretly visit and offer my prayers.

Although the god I worship is already beside me, still, this is this, and that is that.

Such a thing is what I believe in.

The act of praying is relieving to a person, and it allows one to live their life to the fullest everyday.

I have already been doing it for so many years now.

It has become a vital part of my existence.

Suppose such a place becomes known, what would happen?

What would Sylphy think?

What would Roxy think?

I want to think that Lilia already sort of understands.

And Aisha at first has taken the trouble to pretend not to have known.

However, Norn would probably despise me more if she knew.

And then perhaps they'd demand I destroy the altar.

"Ah, Aisha. I uh, am only thinking of your well being after all. Treant is a dangerous monster you know, and even if you raise it, there is no telling if it still won't be dangerous."

"Don't worry, I no longer mind that Onii-chan is a pervert, but I wonder how Sylphy-ane and Roxy-ane would feel? Especially Roxy-ane, that for all these years you've been holding on to her underwear, how would she feel if she knew?"

Gununu.

This rascal.

Here I am just trying to look out for her well being, and then bam... she threatens me!

Ahhh. Shit, How should I handle this?

I'm doing the best I know how to do.

Then, in the moment that I was most troubled.

The door behind me suddenly opened.

"Umm, I thought I heard my name, were you trying to call for me?"

"EH!"

"EH!"

Me and Aisha both turned around in wonder at who was standing in the doorway.

There, standing there dressed in her robes, was the person I had just seen off only a little while ago, Roxy.

And she was wearing a blank face.

"W,Why is Roxy here...and not at the Academy?"

"Ah I had left something behind, and I came back to get it real fast. At this time, I don't have any class."

How Roxy-like of her, to forget something!

No, it's not like that.

"Say Roxy-ane, Did you know? Onii-chan has Roxy-ane's MFFFFFFHFUFHHFFF....."

I panicked and held my hand over Aisha's mouth.

What should I do?

"....."

"....."

Silence fills the room.

And on the windowsill, Baby Treant meanders about.

Roxy's eyes hone in on it.

...All right.

For now, I'll let Roxy voice some opposition to it.

Surely she can relate to the fear of keeping a Treant well enough.

"This is a Treant isn't it?"

"It, It appears to be that way, Roxy. It seems Aisha has been wanting to suggest that she cultivate it! But, The Treant is a demon too, and I wonder if it wouldn't be dangerous instead? Does Roxy also think that the idea is no good?"

Aisha makes 'Mff Mff' sounds while trying to pry my hand from her mouth.

Fool, don't you understand my true power?

Even if you bite it, I won't ever remove it.

Ah, Wai-, don't lick it.

Ack, Don't slurp it either!

"Isn't it wonderful!"

How unexpected!

She approved of it!

"If it is raised properly and takes to a person well, I doubt one of this size would be dangerous to a person."

"Eh? Really?"

"Yes. While I haven't really taken a good look at this one, The Migurudo tribe bred Treants to keep harmful birds out of the fields."

Is that so?

That the Migurudo Village had such things?

Whether there was, or there wasn't.

Did I even look?

I can't really remember it all that well.

Well.

Was it not dangerous after all?

I moved my hand off of Aisha's mouth.

"Aisha. Perhaps, Onii-chan was mistaken."

Though Aisha gave me a suspicious look, eventually she gave me a broad smile.

"But, Onii-chan was also trying to think about myself as well."

"Right. Of course I was. Keeping a demon would be dangerous, right?"

"Then, about 'that thing'... I'll keep quiet about it for now."

"Thank you Aisha. How about you go cook us something delicious, right now?"

"Sure!"

Aisha separated from me.

And then ran over to Roxy, clinging to her with a 'pyon~'

"I love you Onee-chan!"

".....Eh ah, okay?"

Finally, only the perplexed face of Roxy remained.

Part 5

Thus, the household pets now included 『Baby Treant』

Of course, I attached several conditions on the matter of keeping it.

Firstly, if he ever harms a person he will be disposed of immediately.

Secondly, it must be properly trained to not attack people.

Thirdly, the family must be instructed properly on what kind of plant it is.

Fourthly, taking into account the worst-case scenario, it is to never be put near the baby.

Etc.

Though saying these various rules made Aisha's mouth sour, she nodded without making an unpleasant face.

But because the orders were mostly relevant to the protection of my child, everything should be fine.

Incidentally, in regards to the name of the Baby Treant, it was given the name 『Beet』

I have expectations for its growth.

Certainly in the future it will become a wonderful protector of my rice garden.

Still, for her to have found that altar...

I truly cannot take her maid skills lightly.

9 Rumors of the School - Number 4

"A monster lives at the Banchou's house."

CHAPTER 5

A FATHER OF DIGNITY

Three months passed again in the blink of an eye.

Summer is here.

The snow has already completely melted; every day is drying heat.

Part 1

This year, I'm crazy about Lucy.

Whenever I have the time, I hover over to see Lucy.

She is my first child.

I must adore her very much.

Even now, in a custom-made baby room on the first floor, I am still looking at Lucy.

Looking at her angelic yet naive and innocent face,

With naturally loose cheeks, and a mouth that looks sloppy.

However, for now, I am the pillar of this house.

Although I don't have any dignity, I still have to pretend in front of my wives and sisters.

If I dote on children too much, my cool image will fade.

So, I think I should be stricter with my child.

Yeah, strict.

Perhaps, Paul also thought about it when he saw me,

Fathers are great; they should be the children's goal.

Once, I thought that Paul looked like a pathetic man to me.

But, now is different.

Paul was a great father.

Although he was lacking in some areas, he's still a great father.

Indeed, he was rough with his relationships with females, but that was not something I should say about, that's why it's enough to see the part of how great he was.

For now, I can say like this:
I want to be like Paul—.

"Aahn, Aah"

Ah, that's not good; Lucy woke up crying.
And Sylphy isn't around.

"Be good—, Lucy-chan. It's daddy, funny face."
"Akyuwa, Kyakkya!"

Oh, so cute.
Is there anything in this world that is cuter than a grinning Lucy?
If there are angels that exist in this world, this child should be one.

Ah, not good,
I was just thinking about the dignity of a father.
I think a father should be a presence that is closer yet further.
Usually gentle with children, but sometimes will scold them severely.
But, if anything happens, a father should protect his child with his life, saving the child.
Should be that kind of existence,
An ideal father should be like that.
Eh?
This is completely like Paul.

To me, Paul is the ideal father.
I don't want to let my children know I am a useless father.
But, due to his uselessness, I felt closer to Paul.
There were many things to learn from him.

And, although I viewed him as a failure of a father,
But, to Norn, he was a good father.
Otherwise, she wouldn't have become that attached to him.

Whatever it is, cherishing children is the most important thing—

"Ah—, ahwa—, wa—."

Not good, Lucy is crying again.

"Oh—be good. Lucy-chan. It's daddy. Carry high. Be good."

"Ukya, Akyakya!"

I carry and rock Lucy about.

Lucy is delighted.

Rocking in my forged strong arms, she smiles like a cupid.

Oh, so cute.

"I wonder, Danna-sama."

"What's the matter, Suzanne?"

While I cradle Lucy, the nanny Suzanne comes to speak to me.

She's a former adventurer, and an acquaintance of mine.

"Cradling Ojou-sama, shouldn't I be doing it?"

"Please do not take away my time of happiness."

I knew her when I was an adventurer.

I had not seen her for 4 years.

When we met in a place for recruiting nannies, I was surprised.

"Well, I can't stop you if you want to do it."

"Are there men who are unwilling to do this?"

"My husband isn't willing to do that."

"Then he is not self-conscious enough to be a father."

I still remembered the time well when I met her.

When, I was 12 years old, and broke up with Eris, I headed north to cover my sorrow.

I was at a town in the corner of Basherant Dukedom, alone, feeling the indescribable loneliness brought by the dissolved [Dead End] party.

At that time, in order to distract myself from the loneliness, I accepted quests that cannot be done alone.

There was also a time when I wanted to give up.

And then there was Suzanne's group.
Two warriors, one healer, one mage: a 4-person party,
Her party rank was a B-rank; four of them were veterans.

Suzanne was a warrior.
Although she was not skilled in swordsmanship, she was still one of the B-rank
adventurers.
But, she is a woman who was caring, and deserved respect.

She spoke to me who was accepting quests alone.
[This quest needs more than one person. Do you need help?]
I remembered that feeling.
And then I replied, [Oh, then I am glad if you can help. I want to gain some fame].

To see me like that, Suzanne was shocked.
She seemed to be in a panic.
Moreover, it seemed when I spoke to her in honorifics with dead eyes; it made her feel
a creepiness that overwhelmed her shock.

In spite of that thought, Suzanne was willing to help me.
Before I left town, she invited me to join a fixed party many times.
After all that, she kept saying, even if I refused to join a party, I shouldn't be eating
alone, and she treated me a meal.
In hindsight, I might have been taken care of by her a lot.
And I appreciated that.

After that, Suzanne seemed to have married one of the magicians in the party.
And, I started living in the hometown of magicians known as Sharia.

Now, she is a mother of two children.
However, the third one seemed to be a premature infant; it died right after birth
unfortunately.

Even though the third child died, she still has breast milk.
And, breast milk could be sold.
She found my name in the place for recruiting nannies.
And that is how we met again.

"...Anyway, you've really changed."

"Did I change that much?"

"Of course, if it was the old you, you would not belittle a husband in front of his wife."

Certainly.

And if I thought of that, during those days, I was extremely afraid to offend others.

That feeling has not changed much, even now.

But, probably after going through many things, it seems to have faded a little.

"Did I make you unhappy?"

"No. That will be fine. Just take it as a joke. I also can feel slightly sociable."

It was also the same at school,

Making jokes tended to put us slightly closer.

Zanoba and Cliff also want to be close; I also felt easier.

"That kind of spooky honorifics, is it all right not to use them? You're the employer."

"Well, one must have manners if one wants to be closer to another."

"Right."

Suzanne says with a wry smile.

I am grateful to her.

No matter what, the one who told me about the common knowledge of the adventurers in the northern continent:

It was her.

"Well, it's alright with me as long as I can get my pay."

"Of course, I will not fail you."

It is good to get more gold.

Even though these were just spoken words, Suzanne did her job seriously.

I still felt uneasy due to cases in my previous life where the babysitter would abuse the infant.

But Suzanne treated Lucy as her own child.

Well, Lilia and Aisha would always be in the house- I also know Suzanne would not do anything to a friend's child.

"Come to think of it, how are your sons?"

"Both of them are terrifically healthy. But they stick to my grandparents like superglue."

Suzanne seems to be living with her husband's parents.

Of course, otherwise, she would not leave the children alone when she became a nanny.

Living with the mother-in-law seems to have many kinds of problems, she would complain to Lilia about them.

Lilia did not have much to say in the position of a mother-in-law, but she seems to be the same age as Suzanne, so conversing with her was easier.

I have witnessed them often drinking tea together.

"...Do you feel it is better to have a boy as your first child?"

"No not really, why do you ask?"

"You know, it's about having an heir."

"Ah."

Children were born to do that, I heard that story many times.

Zanoba, Ariel said that too.

Indeed royal families, noble families seem to be concerned with boys and girls who were born.

Boreas nobles in the Asura Kingdom also said that, the main family would adopt boys who were born.

"I am not even a noble or a merchant. It's enough as long as they grow up healthily."

Rather, girls were cuter.

Recently, there was an imbalance with boys and girls in the house.

However, I had no complaints especially when cute girls are surrounding me.

They are not unreasonable or oppressive.

All of them support me.

"That's nice. My husband, from the time I got pregnant, went on and on about how we'd raise him if it's a boy... I never even considered what to do if a girl was born instead."

"And then a boy was born, was that not good enough?"

"I guess. Though I feel a little bit complicated about it. Well, the third one was a girl."

"Oh, it... I'm sorry about that..."

If Lucy was a dead infant,

As I think about it, I am horrified.

"I'll just give birth to another. It's alright."

However, Suzanne was quite open-minded.

I wondered was it like that?

If one could not make it and just give birth to another,
I wondered if something like that could be easily thought.

At least, I would not think so.

Sylphiette had a body that could not be that easy to impregnate.

Not only that,

Speaking of her, her feelings would be more down than I, with tear-filled eyes she would say, [I am sorry- Rudi's baby- I did not manage to give birth properly, I am so sorry.]

Oh, even just the thought pains my stomach.

Stop.

This is just an imagination.

Lucy was born; Sylphiette is also healthy.

This was not a dream.

"Ara?"

Suddenly, Suzanne looked behind me.

"Mother."

I turn to look; it's Zenith.

With Lilia following from behind,

"..."

"Excuse me, Rudeus-sama."

Zenith walked over with a dazed look, sat in a position beside my side,
Where she can look at Lucy,

"Mother. Today again, Lucy is quite healthy!"

"..."

There's no response from Zenith.
But, she still keeps looking at Lucy.

I felt ever since Zenith came into this home that she began to move more actively.
She eats together if Norn is around.
She also pulls weeds with Aisha.
When I look at Lucy, she comes over here the same way she did.
She also has different reactions towards Sylphiette and Roxy.

Her expressions still had not changed; she is also unable to speak.
However, she can move by herself.
There was a change.

Although it's little by little, she is still heading towards recovery.

"..."
"Akyawa! Kyan!"

Zenith reaches out to Lucy.
With a smiling face, Lucy held her hand.



"Lucy, you sure love grandmother a lot."

Initially, I was more wary.

Zenith seems to have the so-called senile dementia,

Possibly, she may cause harm to Lucy after a change of some sort of emotion.

However, it was groundless.

Zenith only stares at Lucy quietly.

There were no negative feelings.

Rather, she lets out an atmosphere of a grandmother who cares for her grandchild.

Why should I worry whether Zenith will harm Lucy?

In the first place, Zenith had never gone on a rampage.

"Ahu—! Keke!"

I wonder, did Lucy also know about it?

Each time she interacted with Zenith, she was always smiling.

Granddaughter and grandmother, it is a heart-warming sight.

That said, there's no knowing what will happen based on Zenith's condition.

Somehow, I did not feel anything would happen after seeing this sight. But at least, I did not know what would happen; I should not leave them out of sight.

It was good for each other.

Even without the intentions, accidents do happen.

" ... "

Suddenly, Zenith raises her head.

She is looking at me.

I wonder what is wrong.

It feels like she wants to say something.

"Ah—Eh! Ah—Eh!"

The next thing, Lucy starts to cry.

"Madam, Zenith. If you'll excuse me."

Lilia carries the baby away from Zenith slowly.
Suzanne approaches her, and begins cradling Lucy after lifting her.
At the same time, she checks the condition of the diaper and Lucy's back for rashes.
And, she nods.

"It's almost time for her breastfeeding."

Has it been that late?
To say, after Sylphiette breastfed her in the morning, it has been a long while.

"Very well, I will excuse myself."
"It's alright to stay and watch."

Although Suzanne said that, I still refused.
Even if she's someone I know, I shouldn't be looking at another wife's breasts.

After all, Suzanne's breasts will never lose to Zenith and Lilia's size.
Moreover, I did not know whether now is her milking period, her breasts seem to be much bigger.
If I saw them, the Sennin^[27] from my heart will be awakened.
Then I would be dripping saliva over Lilia.
Sylphiette and Roxy will be disappointed.
Indeed, it's clear that their breasts couldn't win.
But, I did not choose them because of their breasts.
That kind of worry is needless.

Saying about that, Zenith:
Did she feel that Lucy was hungry?
...Having the experience of bringing up two children, she might be able to feel that.

Part 2

I left the room.

I am looking out the window, and it is raining, unfortunately.

I am not sure about the time, but if it is breastfeeding time, it should be noon right now.

I am just a little concerned about Lucy, and it has been a long day.

But, I did not feel it is a waste of time.

To me, this is a precious time.

I go into another room.

It's where I've prepared my research, a small room on the first floor.

Recently the number of rooms had decreased as the number of family members increased; I had to make effective use of the remaining ones.

But, for guest rooms, let's just leave one.

I walk towards the desk that was tailored to the room.

Placed on the desk, there were my research reports and the magic stone.

During this half of the year, I did not just play around with my sisters and daughter.

I was also investigating things about the magic stone.

From a hard fought battle with the Hydra, a magic stone that absorbs mana.

This magic stone seems to look like a pale green scale.

If it had no transparency, it would look like a piece of stone.

When I studied the magic stone at the library, I found out a few things.

Firstly, the name of the magic stone,

It seems to be known as a [Mana Absorbing Stone]. ^[28]

The stone was made from a Manatite Hydra's^[29] body, and has the ability to absorb mana from the surroundings.

It seems to have gone extinct together with Manatite Hydra, it is now considered a phantasmal magic stone.

Most dragon-type creatures seem to be able to generate magic stones inside their bodies.

It would be like pearls, or maybe something like gallstones.

The one that is on my magic staff, it was also generated from the body of a dragon-type serpent creature.

There are various different types of effects, but basically they often involve affecting mana.

It could amplify the mana or reduce the magic consumption cost, with the same mana you could demonstrate double the power.

In other words, there is nothing strange about a magic stone that absorbs mana instead.

The problem is the theory behind how it absorbs mana.

This magic stone, if left alone, would not absorb mana.

So then how could you make it absorb mana?

I thought of some experiments and tried them.

Then, surprisingly early in, I obtained some results:

A "front and back" were present in this magic stone.

They were difficult to see in appearance, but they were certainly there.

If I placed my hand on the back and applied mana, the front would start absorbing mana.

When that happened, a high-pitched sound would ring out.

It was not automatically active, and could be manually turned on or off.

If I was to try saying it, it'd be something like the suckers on an octopus tentacle.

Apparently, that Hydra seems to activate the magic stone the moment it sees magic; any magic that flies toward it would then be rendered useless.

Those are wonderful reflexes.

But, that would be obvious, of course.

For wild animals, their reflexes and vision are overwhelmingly better than humans are.

Thinking of which, Ruijerd's stone—the thing on Supardia Tribe's heads, it should be the same kind of magic stone.

After experimenting further, I found that apparently the magic stone seems to be [not necessarily absorbing mana].

I released magic on myself: while raising the magic stone and shouting "Now!" I activated the effect. The mana I used was also not recovered.

Rather, I feel like the same amount of mana I used to cast the released magic was drained from me again.

Although there is much to investigate regarding this point, I tried to make a single hypothesis:

Could it be that mana generated into the back of the stone transforms into [a canceling wave] through the front, effectively negating magic?

I think, though it has an effect similar to Disturb Magic, its breakdown power is at a higher level.

Of course, some things cannot be explained.

For example, even though I tried hitting a doll I had created with the wave, it did not break.

The doll is okay, yet the [Rock Bullets] are useless.

I wonder what the difference is.

After existing for such a long time, did the magic doll become unbreakable after the mana stabilized?

...Hmmm,

It can't be helped, even if I try.

I am not clear about what mana actually is in the first place.

Yet more than the finer details, I want to prioritize thinking about how to use it or how to deal with it.

While I was thinking, I carried out another experiment.

I feel that by using this magic stone, it is something that can destroy things that Disturb Magic could not.

So, for example, a [Magic Circle].

I asked Cliff to help me with this experiment.

The result: I was able to destroy every magic barrier that Cliff had drawn.

Although the magic circle on the paper remained, as long as I trigger the stone, it seems to erase the magic without any problems.

However, there was a magic circle in the Hydra's room:
That blood colored magic circle.

In addition, magic circles inside of magic tools can't be erased, as well.
Instead of being drawn, maybe both could be engraved?
Let's just remember that under [things that can't be dispelled].

Anyway, most things are erased.
So, even if I am trapped in a barrier, I could escape it on my own, as well.
Of course, the most important thing is to avoid being trapped.

By inserting it in the palm of [Zariff's Prosthetic Hand], it might be useful later.
But, it would be difficult to use magic with the same hand...

Part 3

"Onii-chan. A guest has arrived."

I was in my laboratory for a while; Aisha's face appeared.
With a professional expression:

"Who is it?"

"It's Zanoba-sama."

Zanoba, Julie and Ginger as well, I'm sure,
Is there any problem?
No. Not necessary to come over just because of something.
He could also come over to play.

"Ask them to wait in the living room."

"Leave it to me."

I stand up and say in a perfunctory manner.

Speaking of Zanoba, his research is also progressing.
It is the study of the automatic doll.

Currently, he has finished researching the hand, and now is in the process of researching the foot.
In the process, he made [Zariff's Prosthetic Leg], but it is still an unreliable product.

About the leg, it has the same mechanism that my hand has.
I also helped him to make a prototype.
Zanoba came up with the blueprints, I made the model, and Cliff engraved the magic circles.
The work consumed a lot of time and effort.
It took nearly a month to make one.
Although someday I want to sell prosthetic arms and legs, the production still has a long way to go.

Well, after research on both hands and legs, Zanoba had begun conducting research on the doll's body.

He carefully had cut its body where the limbs joined, opened, and disassembled it from the inside.

Then, inside the center of its chest, he told me he found a big magic stone.

Red colored- a magic stone that has the same beautiful shape of a crystal,

However, it was not a solid magic stone.

Rather, a combination of small magic stones that has magic circles engraved on them.

Without a doubt, this would be the core of the autonomous doll.

If one can analyze the pattern that is written in this core,

Then making the same thing is possible.

And, by advancing research from there, it would make the dream Maid Robot.

That said: Zanoba seemed to be stuck a little there.

The contents of the pattern were too bizarre.

Moreover, the related written contents on the old book had diagonal lines canceling them.

In short, we saw that the maker of the automatic doll was still in the process of researching the core.

As the current product was incomplete, we were also not clear about the maker's goal.

Researching from here on would be extremely challenging.

However, Zanoba said that this was fate; he had decided to do it all over again.

I hoped he did his best.

"Sorry to keep you waiting."

I reached the living room; Zanoba who was sipping tea stands up.

"Shisho, sorry to bother you!"

So as to match Zanoba, Ginger and Julie, who were around the corner of the room, also bowed in silence.

"Any business for today?"

"Because we happened to be nearby, so I came with a greeting."

So he came over to play.

"Okay, please slowly take a seat."

Although it was unusual of him, it was still nothing bad.
While I was thinking, Julie approaches me.

"Grandmaster, this one, it is finished."

As she finishes saying that, she gives me a doll.
It was the homework I gave her, a Ruijerd Doll's duplicate.

"Well, you've improved. Continue this way, from now on."
"Yes!"

Julie bows cheerfully.

While I was on a journey, the doll that Julie undertook, it was completed.
The Ruijerd Doll, which Julie made, was not bad.
Although she made it using my doll as the basis, still I have to admit that she did it better than me.
There are no mistakes with the pose.
Even for outsiders, it would look cool to them.

After Norn sees it, she mutters in a low voice "I want." It is given to her as a present.
Later, it would go on her shelves in her dormitory room.

I see the success, and order Julie to mass-produce the accepted Ruijerd Doll.
Although it takes time to make one, it is better to make it one-by-one, slowly.
She is also going through magic training, and when it is time to sell one, there is no loss if there are a few.

"Yesterday, Norn-Sensei, we met at school."
"Oh, really, you met, what did you say?"
"She thanked me, so I thanked her back."
"I see, that's great."

I pat Julie's head.
Julie's body is a little rigid, but she still allows me to touch her obediently.

So, recently Norn had also completed the book.
Although she has started to practice sword training, Norn has never quit writing.
The book story is short; the writing style, it looks rough,
And there's only one story.
It spoke about how Ruijerd fought for his lord, yet was betrayed and went off for revenge. It was all about the spear's story.
But, it is enough to express his sorrow; and also the stubbornness of Ruijerd.
With a little editing, it'll be enough to release it to the young ones.

I read it to Julie, and it is the best to her.
She persistently keeps asking me to read it again; in the end, I read it to her three more times.
If Ginger did not stop her, I would be reading to her for the fourth time.

I hear that no one read stories like that to Julie when she was small.
The dwarven race did not have that kind of culture.
Or should I say, both parents had no time to look after her,
Well, either way, it's good.

Due to that happening, I actually had wanted to find a chance to let Norn and Julie know each other, but they have already met.
Being called as a sensei-whatever^[30], sure gave Norn the shivers.

No matter what, as long you get along, it's good.
Getting to know each other is the first step for a good relationship.

Anyway, the image-improving plan of the Supard Race is progressing well.

Research and training,
Doing what can be done.
Doing more than is required; I will be overloaded, indeed.

One might say it's better to focus training on just one thing.
But, I am afraid I don't have that kind of talent.
It was true in the previous life, and it did not change, even now.
There is always someone stronger.
Indeed, it is possible to make the top in the academy, but there are even stronger ones out in the open world.
There are talents which not even effort can surpass.

But, it is not always necessary to win by force.
It's okay to win in various turfs.
If it is not possible to win by confronting, go for the sides.

Although that's what I always thought,
However, foes like the Manatite Hydra might still occur.
Just in case of emergency, I need to have the strength to protect my family.
But I am still not good at close quarters fighting.

"Zanoba, do you want to look at Lucy?"

"Oh! Your daughter!? Is that all right?"

"Sure, why not?"

"Oh yes! Although, I forget which country it is, but there's a place with customs that does not allow children below the age of 5 to meet outsiders."

"I prefer it; it's better to let her be blessed by all kinds of people."

Well, for now, this is not the time to think that complicated.
No matter what, just make sure every little thing in view is done.
Every day: bodybuilding, magic practicing, doing research, and interacting with different kinds of people...
I'm now beyond comparison with my previous life.
The current situation for me is too damn good.
So, there is nothing to be hasty about.
If too hasty, it will blind you from the surroundings; and you fall sometimes when you are blind.
Just like what happened that time with the Hydra,
That's why for everything I do, I must put in effort.

I wonder, what will be my next step?
I have my prosthetic hand.
Research is progressing.
Get along with my wives.
My sisters and daughter are healthy, as well.
The resources at hand are still enough.
And life is stable.
...Now for the next thing:

Time for Roxy to teach me Water King class magic.

9 Rumors of the School - Number 5
"The Banchou loves small children."

CHAPTER 6

WATER KING CLASS

Part 1

Somewhere in the Magic University, lustful voices rang.

"No, stop!"

Outside of a storage that had been re-purposed by students as a gym locker.
A young man grabs tight the hand of a girl with aqua hair.

"Eh, say yes! Sensei, please?"

"No means no!"

But that girl refuses his advances.
She shook her head.
Even so, the boy refuses to quit.

"Once, just once!"

"I said no. Let go. Lunch break is over already."

"Don't say that!"

The boy lets go.
The troubled girl searches her surroundings.
Outside the gym locker, there are still a few students milling about.
But they quietly turn away from the girl's pleading eyes.

Why? Because that boy is too scary.
He's the most well-known riff-raff of the area.
So everyone thought,
Even if I try to help, her fate is sealed.
Not only that, but I too might experience something terrifying.
Knowing that, there's not one person brave enough to help her.

"Sensei, please reconsider. It won't feel bad for either of us. Well, first you might hate it a little, but it will feel better later on."

"Well.. True..."

"If you do this favor, I'll do anything Sensei asks?"

"Oh, but..."

That boy's pursuit against the reluctant girl is relentless.

Bunching closer to her, as if to whisper something to her.

That motion makes her face flushed.

Fiddling with her triple ponytail, she shyly droops her head.

"The Student Council came!"

Just then, the so-called [Most Handsome Man on Campus] has arrived.

With a sunglass-wearing, white-haired girl behind him.

"Kyaa! Luke-sama!"

"It's 'Silent Fitts'!"

Student Council members Luke and Fitts.

"Luke-sama, you're so cool today too!"

"Give me a hug~!"

"Fitts-sama, you're looking cuter everyday."

"Please show us your face!"

With people cheering them on, the two approaches the boy and girl.

"We received reports that Rudeus attacked another female student..."

Luke sighs.

The boy before him is the one called Rudeus, and the girl Roxy.

Not a student, nor is there an attack.

With the facts checked, he turns around and heads back the way he came.

"Fitts, I'll leave the rest to you."

"... Oh."

Fitts nervously rubs her ear and nods.

"Haa."

After Luke left, Roxy sighs too.

"Female student, huh?"

"It can't be helped. Lots of people still don't realize that Roxy-sensei is a teacher yet."

Rudeus nods in sympathy.

"Eh? Sylphy, what's wrong?"

He suddenly realizes Sylphy is wearing an unhappy expression.
Slightly puffs a cheek.

"Em, Rudi. Just because you're married, doesn't mean you can be so forceful. Girls have times when they don't want to too, you know?"

"Eh? Yeah, sure I understand."

"Well, even though Roxy-sensei might be better at it, I'm here for you too..."

Fitts mumbling her words.

"... Unless."

Rudeus approaches Fitts visibly excited.

He pokes Fitts's one puffed cheek.

With the puffed cheek suppressed, but the other side puffs up.

"Haha! Sylphy is jealous!"

Rudeus hugs Fitts tightly.

Not enough to put her completely at ease, but her anger is gone.

"J-jealous, not even..!"

"Don't worry, Sylphy. I don't plan to leave Sylphy out either."

"Eh, what, then, you mean the 3 of us...?"

Rudeus whispers in Fitts's ear.

"That's right. Let's ask Roxy to teach us together."

"Umm, Roxy will teach us?"

"Of course, she knows it the best."

Fitts glances to her side.

Roxy instantly turns away.

"I haven't agreed to it."

"Don't say that. Fitts want to know too?"

"B-but it's embarrassing..."

From when Rudeus starts to hug her, Sylphy begins to fidget.

Dressing as a boy.

But with her sunglasses you can't read her mood, but she's probably already wet.

"W-well, it's for Rudi's sake... okay?"

"Sylphy!"

Moved, Rudeus buries himself in her hair, enjoying its softness and sweet scent. His hug tightens.

Losing herself in his firm biceps, Fitts lets herself go, ready for whatever.

Too easy.

Roxy looks at the scene with envy.

Rudeus did not relent in Roxy's pursuit.

"Why do you refuse? Don't tell me, Roxy hates me?"

Rudeus says, looking hurt. Roxy rushes to answer.

"No, not even! I like Rudi the most. Love, I love you!"

"Then, why?"

"Well, if I taught you, then I don't have anything I can beat Rudi in anymore..."

"Who cares about winning. Roxy's existence alone is greater than I!"

"Hey, Rudi. Now that you mentioned it, I'm not as great as you think. I'm just petty and scared that my student will surpass me."

"It's fine. Even your pettiness, I think it's great!"

"Basically, learning this might take a few months? Well, Rudi and Sylphy are more talented than I am, so maybe a little faster..."

Just now, Fitts realized she might have misunderstood something. Coming back to her senses, she asks her man.

"Em, sorry, Rudi. What are we talking about?"

To Sylphy's question, Rudeus replies.

"Ah. I was asking Roxy to teach me Water King-class Magic."

So that's what it was.

Part 2

--- Rudeus's POV ---

Bicycle of youth.

As in when an adolescent boy and girl ride a bike together.

The boy busy pedaling with a girl riding behind.

Sitting side straddle on the back rack, gripping tightly to the boy's waist, while trying to subtly keep their distance.

Occasionally the roles are reversed too.

Eventually riding like that together, they arrive at a riverbed colored red by sunset.

The crimson sun concealing their flush cheeks.

Right now, my situation is something similar.

Even though the sun still hangs high.

But before my eyes I can see Sylphy's nape.

Just sticking my nose out a bit, I can enjoy to my heart's content of Sylphy's sweet scent.

I wrap my arm around Sylphy's waist, crossing near her tummy.

Keeping her upper half wrapped tight.

Sylphy's beating heart can be clearly heard from her bosom.

How wonderful.

By the way, I kept our lower halves subtly distant.

The reason should be obvious.

Even a wife deserves some propriety.

Also, harassing a busy driver is just begging for accidents to happen, so I have heard in my previous life.

"Matsukaze is such a good horse. Obedient, trustworthy, and strong too!"

A voice from Sylphy's front.

I look over her shoulder and see aqua covered head.

Roxy.

She sits in front of Sylphy.

"That's right. Such a great horse is truly rare."

Comfortably we're riding a single horse together.

Roxy in the front, Sylphy and I in the back.

The pet least cared for by the family, Matsukaze trots ahead, completely unhindered by the three it carries on its back.

"If I remember correctly, Ginger picked him out. That person really knows her horses."

"Does Sylphy know a lot about horses?"

"Ah, no, not really. But I have seen in Asura palace the one they claimed as the best horse of the land. The one ridden by Knight Captain-san."

"Then it must be really great."

As soon as I said that, Matsukaze neighs loudly.

"Ah, sorry. You're great too. Only to be expected of Greyrat House's horse."

Roxy busies herself to comfort Matsukaze.

Does this horse understand human speech?

Or rather, does Roxy know horse?

No, no matter what kind of pet, if you talk with it everyday, you can read them eventually.

Aisha seems to talk with Jirou often.

"But sitting in the front at my age is kind of embarrassing."

Roxy has a habit of hiding her blushing face during physical contact.

She probably feels like riding in a baby seat, for riding in front of the one holding the reins.

"Maybe I should ride Jirou instead."

"Not allowed. Saying that, are you trying to make a run for it again?"

"I'm not a little kid. I won't run."

While listening to my wives' friendly banter, I take in my surroundings.

We're on the outskirts.

On the right a pretty little creek, and on the left an expansive empty field and forest.

Even though we're so far up North, there is plenty of green this season.
Just now we can see fields of taro and wheat, but now there's only vast wilderness.
We didn't plan on how far we're going, just somewhere without many people.

Fish in the creek dancing under the sun.
A tributary of the major river next to Sharia.
Even though this isn't very far off, but fishing here on a nice day should feel quite nice.
Well, I actually never fished before.

"Now that it's decided, I plan to teach properly."

It has to be here.
After Roxy finally relented, she made that condition.

"The spell I'll teach is Water King Magic [Lightning]."

Roxy looks a little reluctant.
Sylphy and I nudge ourselves against her shoulders.

So Lightning, huh?
From the name alone, it sounds like the lightning magic we often think of.
Well, thinking about it, Lightning Magic doesn't seem to exist in this world.
And King Class too.
Must be some awe-inspiring magic.

"Okay, here should be fine."

Arrived at some point, Roxy jumps down off the horse.
She ties Matsukaze to a tree roughly the width of my thigh.
How nostalgic.
I learned Water Saint Magic in a place like this, with a horse tied like this.

"Sensei, do you still remember Kalajav?"
"Ah. Paul-san's horse. How nostalgic..."

Roxy says, her eyes off to a distance.
I was 5 back then.
12 years have passed already.
I learned many things since then, but it's finally time to reach King Rank.

Feels like I took a very long detour.

Ah.

That time our horse almost died by lightning.

It survived barely, but dying from that wouldn't be at all strange.

Roxy might have forgotten about it already, but just to be safe.

"It's safe this time, right?"

"It's safe. But you should cover Matsukaze up, so he won't catch a cold."

"Got it."

Following her instruction, I build an earth fortress for Matsukaze.

Matsukaze did not object, but hid himself inside it.

"Then, should I keep my distance too?"

"No, it's fine. I can only do it once, so watch carefully."

Sylphy and Roxy wear their raincoats as they talk.

We were soaked during Saint Class too.

If it rains, then those are obviously necessary, so we brought some along.

"All set?"

"Okay."

"Got it."

Roxy nods and points to a far away tree.

A huge tree.

Even far away, it's obvious how wide it is.

"I will target that tree over there. I can only do it once, so please watch carefully."

"Okay."

Roxy nods to me and takes a deep breath.

"Phew... Haa..."

Roxy holds up her staff, closes her eyes, and concentrates.

The preparation time is unusually long for her.

Saint Class was right away, but King Class must be different.

"Phew..."

If someone used Magic Power Eyes to observe Roxy, they could probably see the magic gathering.

Roxy stayed like that for a while.

And a little later, suddenly says.

"Then, I'll begin."

I hold my breath.

Roxy sticks her staff on the ground.

Her left hand holding the shaft, her right holding its magic stone.

Then, reciting each line diligently, she begins incantation.

"Oh great water spirit, the son of the lightning emperor who ascended to the skies!!
Fulfill my wishes, rain down your ferocious blessings, and show me your strength to
this tiny existence! Let your godly hammer strike the anvil, and demonstrate your
authority, and devour the earth with water!!"

Something's off.

No, this isn't right.

"Ah, the rain!! Destroy and wash everything away!"

Suddenly dark clouds cover the sky, turning pitch black.

And immediately rain begins to pour down.

Blustery wind blows, and I was soaked instantly.

Electric flashes cover the sky, soon to become lightning.

But this is merely Water Saint Magic [Cumulonimbus].

"Oh great light spirit, help the lightning emperor in the sky!"

Right when I was thinking.

Roxy continues the incantation.

"Had you not seen that stands on the ground! Rising arrogantly against the emperor!
As sword of the thunder god, strike him down! Let your power shine, show the wrath
of his majesty!"

The clouds shrink with every line.
Those dark clouds tightly gather in a single point.
Squeezed tightly, as if struggling the dark clouds let out flashes of light.
Soon after it reaches the size of a pea...

"[Lightning]!"

A beam of light reaches up to the sky.
Or rather.
From the compressed cloud, the beam strikes the ground.

Lightning strikes.

Bang!

With a slight delay the thunder roars.
From the corner of my eyes, I spy Sylphy covering her ears and wrinkles her face.
I can only watch in awe.

"..."

Lost for words.
Speechless.
Unconsciously my clenched fist trembles.
I swallow my spit.

After the thunder, nothing remains.

The dark clouds covering the sky.
The pouring rain cleansing the earth.
And the lightning bright as day.

And that grand tree off to a distance.

Gone, all gone.

Clear skies.

Only wet ground remains from the rain.

Only charcoal remains from what was once a tree.

"Ha..."

Roxy staggers a step.

Her staff fell, and she fell forward as well.

I rush to catch her.

"Are you alright?"

"It's done. At my magic power, even with my staff I can only do this once... More importantly, [Lightning], did you see it?"

"Yes, Sensei."

I saw it.

I definitely saw it.

I memorized the whole incantation.

"Can you do it?"

"Let me try!"

I left Roxy in Sylphy's care and held up my staff.

Arrogant Water Dragon.

Since I was 10 years old, she has been my partner through thick and thin.

Perhaps even without it I might be able to do this.

But I raised it anyways.

I recall the scene just now.

And towards the sky I shout.

"Oh great water spirit, the son of the lightning emperor who ascended to the skies!! Fulfill my wishes, rain down your ferocious blessings, and show me your strength to this tiny existence! Let your godly hammer strike the anvil, and demonstrate your authority, and devour the earth with water!! Ah, the rain!! Destroy and wash everything away!"

Terrifying magic power flows through the staff in my hand and shoots to the clouds.
Forming as a thundercloud, magic begins to rage.
For [Cumulonimbus], just this is enough.
But I can't stop yet.
If I stop now, compressing it might prove impossible.
So before the magic stabilizes, I move to the next step.

"Had you not seen that stands on the ground! Rising arrogantly against the emperor!
As sword of the thunder god, strike him down! Let your power shine, show the wrath
of his majesty!"

With every word, magic rages ever more.
I forcefully, desperately push further.
A show of force.
This magic requires control.
Until now, I never needed to force such level of control in a spell before.
It might fail.

No.
I did it before.
I remember this feeling.

The same feeling as a high power Stone Cannon.

A moment of clarity.
Control immediately becomes easier.

"[Lightning]!"

The moment that the incantation finishes.
I feel a hole open underneath the compressed magic.
And magic power pours down.

Bang!

.... It lands.
A great lightning strikes.
Without target.
But, it indeed lands where I was aiming for.

"..."

Then, nothing remains.

The clouds in the sky has disappeared.

Only a beautiful open sky remains.

The ground is wet by the rain.

And their raincoats cover in water drops.

Only a shadow burn in the back of my eyes, and ringing in my ears.

Success.

"... Amazing!"

Behind me Sylphy's shock can be heard.

I became a Water-King Magician.

Part 3

"I feel a little frustrated."

On the way back, Sylphy said.
After I succeed, Sylphy tried as well.

After a failure, she succeeded in casting Water Saint Magic [Cumulonimbus].
But [Lightning] failed.
Failed, and she also depleted her magic power.

Looks like magic compression is extremely difficult.
I can do it, probably because I happen to have always been using it.
But Sylphy is clever, so I think she'll figure it out in a few tries.

"I still fail one out of five attempts."

Roxy said that to comfort Sylphy.
Even though it was easy for me, I think Sylphy's failure helped Roxy keep face...

From this, it seems that Sylphy's magic power exceeds Roxy.
Probably because she practiced so frequently as a young child.
But Roxy's magic power is by no means low either.

"Rudi did it on his first try. That's amazing!"
"Yeah, I thought it might be possible. But with such ease, I feel a little lost."
"..."

I don't know how to respond.
Indeed I have been practicing magic since 2 or 3, and worked hard to increase my magic capacity.
But even though, to reach this level, I have to chock up to my special constitution too.
I made effort, but I feel like I cheated somehow.
Thus, I don't know how to join the conversation.

No matter what, bringing my two exhausted wives home safely is my job.
And I should massage their shoulders when I get back.
No sexy time with them today.

They're tired.

"Ah, Rudi, look! It's so pretty!"

I look towards the western sky where Sylphy is pointing, where the crimson sun sets,
That kind of natural beauty is the same in any world.

"Ahh, how pretty."

No, you're prettier. I should be saying.

"Phew..."

Sylphy is tired too, she leans lightly against my body.
We should be home before night fall, but I should stay vigilant.
Right now, neither of them can use magic.
If a magic beast appears, I'll protect them.
So pay attention to my surroundings.

"... Recently, sometimes I wonder if this is a dream."

Roxy suddenly said.
Sylphy tilts her head in confusion.

"Dream?"

"Erm. Whether I'm still trapped in that Labyrinth, a sweet dream before I die, like that."

I stay on guard as I listen in on their conversations.
Those two chat slowly, with exhausted voices.

"The past half year has been wonderful. Married, becoming a teacher like I wished for.
Even if Sylphy considered me just an hindrance, the three of us riding together like this, I can't help but feel blessed."

A hindrance, when she said that, Sylphy shudders a little.

"Eh? Hindrance? That's impossible. I'm happy to live at peace with Roxy. If Roxy wanted to take Rudi away, I don't think I can win."

Sylphy said without an ounce of confidence, because of that, I tighten my hug.
With one hand at the rein, as if to tell me "I know" she caress mine with her other.

"In my view, I was just lucky to meet Rudi when he was still young... If not, Rudi probably wouldn't even look at me."

"That's not..."

"If I hadn't met Rudi, I wouldn't be alive right now."

If I hadn't met Roxy and Sylphy when I was young.

What kind of life would I be living right now?

At least, without meeting Roxy, I might still be a shut-in right now.

If I never left, I would not have met Sylphy. After the Metastasis event, would I have survived the Magic Continent?

If I never met Sylphy.

Then I wouldn't have headed to Fortress City Roa.

Then I wouldn't have met Eris and Ghyslaine either.

But I might have gone to school.

On the magic side, sooner or later I would hit a bottle neck, and request to attend the Magic University at Sharia.

Maybe under different circumstances, Paul wouldn't demand that I wait until 12, and okay it right away.

But, Sylphy won't be there. Not even if I waited.

Perhaps I would still befriend Pursena and Rinia, and eventually even become lovers.

Then, after graduation head to the Great Forest to live with the Beast Race.

No, after the Metastasis Event happens, I probably would head back to Asura.

But I got a feeling that I'll still meet them eventually, and reunite with them.

In Science Fiction this would be called Cause and Effect.

In other words, fate.

Destiny.

"..."

I reach out my hands and hug Roxy and Sylphy together.

"Rudi..."

What has happened.

What hasn't happened.

What's important right now is just to cherish these two.

In the setting sun, we head home.

Part 4

After coming home, I attempt to summarize Water King Magic.
[Lightning].

The logic behind this magic is fairly simple.

Pour enormous amount of magic into the sky, then compress it, and strike a designated spot.

That's it.

Make cloud, get lightning.

With that consideration, [Cumulonimbus] and [Lightning] are two spells of the same vein.

Strength-wise it's the strongest spell in my arsenal.

Concentrate the most magic consuming spell I know, [Cumulonimbus], into a single point.

In destructive power, it might even exceed Stone Cannon.

With this much power, without a doubt it'll come in handy in the future.

Even though it's called "Lightning," fundamentally it's magic compression.

Perhaps other King Ranked magics operate under similar principles.

Regardless of what, as long as I recite an incantation once, thereafter I can always use voiceless incantation for it.

Next time, I should try to shorten the time from [Cumulonimbus] to lightning strike.

But even with practice, there might not be an opportunity to use it.

As a single target spell, Stone Cannon should be plenty.

[Lightning] might be OVER KILL.^[31]

Let's weaken it slightly.

With that thought I try out various tactics, and incidentally created an electric current. I can use voiceless incantation to form a miniature thundercloud, compress, and designate a target for [Lightning], and strike.

Perhaps the voltage is too low, its power is visibly weakened.

I don't really understand the principles, but just as well.

It might be weak, but when it flew off my hand, I still zapped myself.

Oh well, I won't die.

At worst I just feel numb for a bit.

This kind of magic can cause self-harm, so it won't do much in an emergency.

But, a little more practice.

Disabling an opponent is an useful skill to have.

Electric strike is hard to avoid.

And the electricity numbs the nervous system, so it might come in handy against people that wear touki.

I don't have a test subject right now, but if Badigadi ever come back, I'll ask him to help test this out.

Maybe it can become my trump card one day.

By the way, even though it was already named [Lightning].

To distinguish this, I gave it a new name [Electric].

I learned some awesome magic today.

9 Rumors of the School - Number 6

"The Bancho is a monster."

CHAPTER 7

MARRIAGE CEREMONY

Part 1

The night I became Water-King Rank.

That night, I planned to sleep alone.

Since Roxy and Sylphy were both exhausted and in no mood for those things.

I was a little tired myself, but together I definitely won't be able to control myself, so I ended up sleeping in another room.

Hearing that, Aisha volunteered "Onii-chan come sleep with me!"

Even now this happens rather often.

I never initiated myself, but if she asks I won't refuse either.

Thus, I got permission to sleep with her.

Of course, there's no plan for perverted stuff tonight.

Coincidentally, Norn was home that night, she even looked a little jealous.

But Norn is Norn.

Even if I asked she would definitely refuse.

Despite thinking that.

Before I told Aisha okay, I tried to offer Norn as well.

For some reason, she actually said yes! Thus the three of us ended up sleeping in a row.

Aisha to my right; Norn to my left.

The two of them sleeping quietly in my arm pillows.

Even though I am stuck in between and can't even budge, I can't help but feel covered in happiness.

Like I'm completely stuffed by something unknown.

As they say, you need two wings to fly.

Suddenly a shot of inspiration hit me.

[I want to do this with Sylphy and Roxy.]

A devil's temptation.

The snake of desire begins to rear its head and flicks its disgusting tongue.

No, I have to stop myself.

The legendary ménage à trois.^[32]

I have been interested for a long time now.

But actually asking them feels impossible.

Even though I said I will love them both together, but doing it, obviously only one at a time.

Sylphy and Roxy must have assumed the same.

It'd be great if they were okay with it.

But it'd be terrible if my petty desires end up destroying this peaceful life.

It makes me anxious.

Besides, it's not like I don't feel satisfied with the current situation.

To have two once-in-a-generation beauties to myself.

And one even gave me a daughter.

But I still want to try it once.

Because they're different types.

Sylphy is submissive.

She does everything I ask.

I say this, and she'll be embarrassed, but nod.

I say that, and even with fear in her eyes, she won't refuse.

Even so, she's not like a dead fish in bed either. Her reactions are wonderful, and would desperately cling on to me.

All for me.

How endearing.

In comparison, Roxy is the technique type.

She will often seek her Shisho (Elinalise) for guidance, wisdom to improve her talents.

I say this, and she'll consider how to improve upon it.

I say that, and she'll offer an alternative.

Even though there's a difference in stamina, her effort and hard work are more than enough to overcome that.

All for me.
How endearing.

Sylphy is the accept everything unconditionally type.
Roxy is the research and improve type.
I don't plan to measure them against each other.
Even if, while maintaining this current life, my feelings start leaning towards one side,
I don't plan to neglect the other.
I will do everything to treat them equally.

Right. Equally.
And if I say I want to treat them equally at the same time, is that really unreasonable?
No, it shouldn't be.
At least once, that's the heart of man.
All men are weak to the desires of the flesh. ^[33]

But, I can't say it.
Leaving selfish desires at the door, that's the secret of maintaining amicable relationships.
Thus, even though 3P is constantly on my mind these days, that's as far as it goes.
I won't say it in the future either.

At least that's what I thought.

Part 2

Next day. I came to Cliff's research lab.
Cliff is currently researching magic tools.
Research for removing curses.

I put my ear at the door to listen.
In case noise can be heard, I will refrain.
Confirmed that it's safe, I knocked on the door.

"Come in, it's not locked."

I head in and see Elinalise sitting on the windowsill.
Her gorgeous hair of natural curls droop down, her eyes peering out the window.
Just as always, when silent she's a piece of art.
But, she's probably thinking something perverted as usual.

"Just yourself?"
"Yeah."

Cliff has been busy recently, but with research.
Recently he has been considering the use of the magic absorbing stones to improve existing tools.
But not much progress has been made in the past months.

"Cliff, is also making preparations for the wedding ceremony today?"

That's right.
Cliff and Elinalise are getting married.

"Even though I want to help, he said it must be done by him alone."
"That's a man's pride, so please forgive him."

Getting married once she comes home.
Cliff made that promise.
But by the time we got back, Cliff hadn't gotten anything ready.

It can't be helped.

We said two years before we left.
And we came back in half a year.
It would be strange if he was ready.

But Cliff is a man who keeps his promises.
Showing shocking tenacity, he has been making preparations in the past months.
A place to live, furnitures, all the basics.

I tried to help too.
But in the end, all I did was help with finding a place.

Unlike me, he didn't plan to buy a big place.
Just a rented apartment on student street.
He said that if it ever becomes too small, then it's time to move.
Awfully humble for the usually showy Cliff.

But it's not like Cliff is short of money.
All the furnitures he bought are top class. Even if it was an issue, Elinalise would have helped.
I'm well aware of how loaded Elinalise is.

"In any case, congratulations!"

Next month is the wedding.
Calling Elinalise a newlywed might be pushing it, but as long as they're happy, it'll definitely be a wonderful ceremony.

"Anyways, just wait a bit until Cliff gets back."
"Okay."

With that I sit down on a chair.
Elinalise has yet to turn around despite her replies.
Then, a long sigh.

"Ha..."

So she has stuff on her mind she wants to share.
A sigh from Elinalise loud enough to be heard.

"Are you not satisfied with the wedding?"

"No, of course not. Cliff is so sincere. He's almost too good for me. No way I would be unsatisfied."

True.

Even as a man, I can tell Cliff's sincerity.

Of course, he's not perfect.

In fact, he has a lot of flaws.

But Cliff is barely 20.

Looking forward to the future, he'll definitely become someone exceptional.

"Then, Elinalise-san, why do you sigh?"

"Do you need to ask?"

"I don't?"

Oh, bedroom stuff.

"Recently Cliff has been so busy that we can only do it once every three days!"

See, I knew it.

"But it can't be helped. Hasn't Cliff been working hard for Elinalise's sake?"

"Em, of course I know."

"Once your love nest is built, you two won't be leaving for a week anyways."

After the trip, Elinalise and Cliff hunkered down in this lab for quite a while.

It makes one think whether they're only fulfilling their bodily desires.

Well, I'm not one to talk.

It can't be helped.

I love sexy time.

"Ha, I'm so jealous of Rudeus."

"But even I have three day breaks sometimes."

"But you can do it with Sylphy and Roxy together, right? Even though I'm satisfied with Cliff alone, but I'm jealous that you can have two at once."

Of course I object to her suggestion.

"No no no. Ménage à trois never even crossed my mind."

"Eh, never? The more the merrier. Don't you even want to try at least once?"

Bad.

A devil's temptation.

I must not listen.

Be gone! Mara! ^[34] Amen!

"Ménage à trois is just too shameless. Only in Elinalise-san's vocabulary does that even exist."

"I don't think Sylphy and Roxy will mind?"

"Liar! It'll destroy our relationship!"

"True. In some ways Roxy is still pure. If you pop the question out of the blue, you might scare her off."

"See! I told you!"

Right.

That'll definitely happen.

Sylphy is submissive, and she'll do everything I ask.

I don't know what she'll think, but she'll at least hear me out.

Somehow feels like a sacrificial lamb.

But Roxy is different.

She's still a maiden at heart.

If I push for ménage à trois too hard, she might reply [I'm done. I'm going back to mom's.] Then what?

"Ah, how about..."

Elinalise suddenly has the appearance of a guardian angel, in a trustworthy voice.

"I lay the ground works for you?"

Groundwork!

Of course!

It can't be out of the blue.

Since Roxy is already receiving guidance from Elinalise already.

If she subtly mix in some multiplayer information.

And nonchalantly mention it to Sylphy.

Then without worries, we can do this without tripping up!

"Elinalise-san!"

I can almost see a halo around her.
Right there I bow my head down.
On the way down, I can hear Elinalise's cheerful voice.

"Ara ara. What should I do? I get nothing out of this."
"Oh."

So she has demands.
Terrible woman.
But I'm a goner.
Already I'm dancing in the hand of the devil.
Like dangling a carrot in front of a horse.

"What, do I, have to, do?"

I raise my head, Elinalise with a wicked smile.
What a disgusting smile.
Even I won't make such a disgusting smile.
Probably.

"I recall that you should still have some of Asura Kingdom's treasured aphrodisiac."
"Ah, indeed. Still there."
"Then, give them to me?"

Asura Kingdom's treasured aphrodisiacs.
The ones I got from Luke, those aphrodisiacs.
Honestly, I never have a chance to use them.
My stamina and vigor already exceed those two, using that I might actually break them.
And I can't make them drink it either.
I was troubled by how to dispose of them.

"What for?"
"Honeymoon with Cliff."
"Is that even necessary?"

"I want Cliff like a beast for our wedding night."

Why is Elinalise so sincere when it comes to sex?
I think she's demanding too much out of Cliff.

"Elinalise-san, have you considered that Cliff would hate it if you're too demanding?"
"Never. If he hated that, then we won't work out in the first place."
"Never consider meeting him half way?"
"Even if I do, sooner or later things will fall apart. If so, I should just be myself from the start."

As expected of Elinalise.
Thinking carefully, never once did Cliff try to change himself for Elinalise's sake.
Well there's bedroom stuff, but I don't think he feels forced.
Feels like they're just satisfying each other's desires.

I'm a little jealous.

"I got it. I'll bring them next time."
"Thanks. Ah, a drugged Cliff that lost any self control, Ahh.."

Lost in her fantasies, Elinalise's drooling.
Well, em.
As long as it deepens their relationship.

Part 3

A month later.

Saint Milis Church.

The only church in all of Magic City Sharia.

A foreboding solemn atmosphere like a Catholic church.

Lined with simple pews, a Milis Church symbol shines under the light shining through clear window glass.

In front of the church symbol stands a priest.

The priest currently offering to God a solemn prayer.

"Saint Milis forever watch over us."

A man and woman stands side-by-side before the priest.

Both dressed in white.

Behind them, some twenty-some guests watching over them.

-- When a person appears to separate them, Saint Milis will shield them.

-- When a person appears to harm them, Saint Milis will condemn him by the sword.

-- If their love is to become false, Saint Milis will come down from heaven and scorch them."

I'm also a guest.

Dressed in Ranoa Kingdom formal suit and standing at the head of the pack.

Sylphy to my right; Roxy to my left.

Both of them wearing tidy dresses.

Because none of us actually own suit or dresses, we end up buying new ones.

They'll see uses after today, so it doesn't hurt to be prepared.

Ariel and Luke stand beside Sylphy, wearing expensive-looking formal wears.

Behind us are dignitaries like Zanoba, Pursena, and Rinia.

And after them Julie and Ariel's other two attendants.

I can't see from here, but Norn and Aisha should be here as well.

They're wearing dresses also, but theirs are rented.

They're still growing, so I told them it's too soon to buy for them. They reluctantly agreed.

There are others here I don't recognize.
By the way, Nanahoshi is absent.

Milis Church weddings seem to seat guests by social status.
The closest are the high dignitaries and the newlywed's confidants.
Ariel naturally belongs here.
Sylphy is Elinalise's only relative.
As her husband, that means I'm here also.
Her attendant, so to speak.
But standing up front feels rather particularly forbidding.
Of course, the one who feels it the hardest should be Roxy.
As so-called second wife, her existence is an affront to the Church.
Perhaps as a result, Roxy has been rigid from the start.
But Luke said there are many nobility of the Milis faith in Asura Kingdom that nevertheless ignored the one-husband, one-wife command, so don't worry too much about it.

"The husband, Cliff Grimoire, do you solemnly swear to love Elinalise Dragonroad for the rest of your life?"

"I promise to love Elinalise Dragonroad until the day I die."

That sounds familiar.
Is that necessary even for the Milis faith?

Well, Cliff's words hold weight.
He will definitely fulfill his vows.
Elinalise will be the only one in this life.
Even I would yearn for that manliness.
Well, I couldn't.

"The wife, Elinalise Dragonroad, do you solemnly swear to love Cliff Grimoire for the rest of your life?"

"I swear my love for Cliff will never change."

Elinalise's too.
But will she?
Well, that curse remains.
And life span poises a problem.

Cliff will go first, and afterwards Elinalise will probably move on.
But I probably shouldn't say rude thoughts like this.
Yeah.

Still, Elinalise who entered the the Magic University to have sex with 15 year old kids,
getting married, huh?
Life sure has its ups and downs.

"Now, let the groom place on the bride the necklace of Milis."

Cliff receives a necklace from the priest.
On it hangs many various decorations.
An ornamental necklace known as [Necklace of Milis.]
A replica of one actually worn by Saint Milis.
A requirement for every Milis church.

"Eli, lower your head a little."
"Ah. Sorry."

I can hear their whispers.
Elinalise bends down, and Cliff tips his toes to put the necklace on her.
It's kind of embarrassing.
Cliff isn't very tall.

"Bride, please grant the husband a kiss of oath."
"Yes."

Carefully Elinalise bends down and kisses Cliff on his forehead.
Not the lips, forehead.

This ceremony seems to originate from a Saint Milis legend.
Once upon a time, before heading to certain death, he gave a necklace to his most beloved one.
The most beloved one kissed Saint Milis on his forehead, and wished for his return.
When Saint Milis was in dire straits, the most beloved one offered that necklace to God.
God, touched by the exquisite necklace and the most beloved one's love, saved Saint Milis.

That was the legend.
Discerning fact and fiction in this world is difficult.
So that might have really happened.

"God! Please grant these two eternal happiness and prosperity!"

At that moment, the staff on the priest's hand shone a dazzling light.
It bathed the church in white.
The bride and groom become a single silhouette. Their white dresses give an illusion
swallowed by the light.



A scene the stuff of dreams.

But to me that can only think of [Ah, that staff is a magic tool too] it was a little lackluster.

Part 4

The newlyweds left with the guests looking on.

The wedding ceremony has thus ended.

In essence, they're there to show their proof of love to God, and we're merely there as witnesses.

No reception or after party either.

I guess for royalties it might be different, but unfortunately Cliff isn't one.

But if Badigadi were here, he'd definitely yell loudly for an after party.

I was in the mood for one right now too.

It's a time worth celebrating.

"So cool!"

"The bride looks so pretty!"

Aisha and Norn seem excited by the wedding ceremony.

From the start, they were busy exchanging their thoughts about the wedding.

Right now, you can't even tell how they usually don't get along.

But recently, they haven't fought much either.

They're on surprisingly good terms with each other.

"A Milis wedding is so dazzling!"

"I want to wear that one day!"

The two girls yapping among themselves.

Norn will probably find someone one day and wear that white dress.

That someone will be such a lucky man.

My wedding present? A punch to the face.

And Aisha?

I can't imagine her married.

Somehow, she gives the impression of a career maid.

"I guess girls really do yearn for that?"

I ask Sylphy besides me.

"Oh. But it's not like I was unsatisfied. I thought ours were really heartfelt too."

Sylphy said with a smile.

Of course if she wanted it, I could have done the same.

But since I'm not of Milis faith, it's more of an act.

I can always go down on my knees and beg Milis to act as the priest.

Kneeling for women is the honor of men.

No matter how many times I have to kneel.

"..."

Suddenly I feel a tug on my left sleeve.

I turn around to find Roxy looking straight at me.

Her beautiful face, lightly covered in make up.

A faint redness cover her cheeks.

"... Roxy wants a wedding reception too?"

Roxy hasn't had her reception yet.

Part of it was due to Paul's vigil.

The Migurd Race doesn't have any practices of wedding reception either.

That's why Roxy herself said it was unnecessary.

But seeing this scene, she probably has a change of mind.

"No, it's fine. But.. you know?"

With that said, Roxy closes her eyes, puckers out her lips and "Mm."

Before my eyes a beautiful girl waits with her eyes shut.

So this is having something handed to you on a platter.

Bon appetit.

I grab Roxy by her shoulders, and kiss her on her forehead.

"Eh?"

"Excuse me. It's a beautiful forehead."

"Oh, really.. Haha."

Roxy looks a little flustered.

Because she was kissed at a different place than expected.
But, she hasn't started laughing herself silly either.
Too easy.
But that is a nice point too.
Alright, it's decided. Tonight I'll have Roxy.

"Ah, Rudi. Me too, me too."

Sylphy leans on my right with the same request.
Of course I have no reason to refuse her.
No reason to hesitate when it comes to kissing pretty girls on their foreheads.

"Ehehe..."

Even though it was her own suggestion, she still laughs anyways.
Ah, Sylphy is so cute.
What do I do. I want to hug Sylphy.
But I also want to hug Roxy.

Can I hug them both?
Will Elinalise come through?
I think it should be fine now.
The aphrodisiacs are already hers.
I'll ask her next time.

"... Nii-san. In this place, can you hold back a little?"

Norn begins to complain as soon as my perverted face begins to show.
It says on her face, I'm so happy after seeing such a nice ceremony now don't go ruining it, that kind of face.
So watching her relations flirting like this is no good?
Also, doing it with two might have been pushing it.

"It can't be helped."
"Ah! Hold on, stop!"

I pick up Norn and kiss her on the forehead as well.
Her face bright red as she tries desperately to scrub off her forehead.
How nice.

"..."

Aisha looks with a face of envy.

Written on her face: I want it? Can I? What if I was refused? those feelings are there.
Of course, there's no reason to worry at all.

"Aisha!"

With open arms and a face of grace (in my opinion) I face her.

"Onii-chan!"

Her face gleaming, she runs over.

I pucker her forehead, and she clings on me like a cat.

Come, rest in my arms.

But even her legs wrapped around me is a bit too much.

She's wearing a skirt too, so her panty is going to get exposed.

"Aisha. Don't wrap your legs. You're wearing a skirt. It'll be troublesome if your panties showed."

"Okay."

Aisha takes her landing, leading ahead with a face of satisfaction.

Seriously.

I guess at 11 she's still a child, but many girls in this world are already fine ladies at 10.

I should watch her carefully.

"..."

Suddenly, I remembered...

In the letter Paul wrote back then, he said to properly celebrate once everyone reunited.

I have been meaning to, but half a year passed in the blink of an eye.

Neither sister ever even celebrated their 5s and 10s.

But mine were grand, so I feel a little sorry for them.
Right, time to celebrate these happy times.

Okay.
I have decided.

Let's have a party.

9 Rumors of the School - Number 7
"The Bancho is great."

CHAPTER 8

FLOWERS IN BOTH HANDS

Part 1

Two weeks after the wedding ceremony.
I took Sylphy and Roxy downtown.
To buy birthday gifts for Norn and Aisha.

We decided on a surprise party.
Secretly preparing a surprise for the sisters.

There's another reason that the three of us are together, but I'll explain that later.

Part 2

We arrived at the plaza.

Perhaps due to the harvest season, the city is particularly bustling.
Carriages rushing to and forth, people selling fruits and vegetables, faces full of smiles.
Food right now is both plentiful and cheap.

A platform rises in the middle of the plaza.

Soon it'll be the Harvest Festival.

All the festival is a bonfire in the plaza, using big pots to cook the harvest, and everyone having a feast together.

No other event besides that.

Merely a gathering around the bonfire to thank earth for the harvest and feast together.

No singing or dancing.

Speaking of which, ingredients are free to everyone who brings a pot over.

Last year, while I was away, Aisha came to pick up some.

She said it wasn't very good, since the ingredients are just tossed together.

Maybe I'll have some this year?

Even if it doesn't taste any good, I still want to try it.

"This season sure is lively as always."

"Yeah, people from all walks show up around this time."

Roxy glances back and forth with curiosity while Sylphy replies.

Students enjoying themselves in the plaza, searching for merchants,
Farmers with cartloads of vegetables passing by,
Adventurers arguing it out after walking into each other.
Only in this season would Magic City Sharia be so lively.

Many Beast Race can be found in the Plaza too.

Strong ones, wielding great swords the size of machetes.

They're part of the festivities.

The festival coincides with Pursena and Rinia's mating season, so warriors of all ages gather at the Magic University to win their hands.

Seems like Rinia and Pursena are ready to find mates as well. They are taking the challenges seriously this year.

But regardless of traditions, they declared that they would only pick among suitors that can defeat them.

Sword must be Saint Rank or better, Magic must be Advanced Rank or better, adventurers must be at least A Rank, ideally have a beautiful pelt, a wild yet gentle man with upright tail and ears.

Even I think their standards might be a tad high.

Well, I hope they find a good man.

Someone like me.

"..."

I look around.

Roxy to my left.

Sylphy to my right.

Truly, a flower in both hands.

"Um, Sylphy-san, Roxy-san."

"What is it, Rudeus-san?"

"Yes?"

"May I wrap my arms around you?"

A sudden bout of inspiration.

All men dream of this once.

That popular sensation to have a girl in both arms.

Once upon a time, I'd spat out from seeing a guy like that.

But, in my heart I still yearned for it.

I must try it.

"Em."

"... Fine."

Sylphy leans in my right.

Roxy sheepishly leans on my left arm.

Ohh, envious eyes shower upon me, like during the Resurrection of Jesus.
How pleasant, to be envied.

Just kidding.

Rather than in my delusions, basically no one looked.

Merchants are all too busy, and all the beast warriors are rushing to the Magic University.

A few students sheepishly glance but quickly look away.

Adventurers too, whether at the tavern or bickering outside, waste no time to jeer at us.

Even so, I'm already satisfied.

In particular.

The sensations from my right arm.

That tactile feedback from here and there simply didn't exist from Sylphy in the past.

'Here and there' might be a bit rude.

Her breasts.

Leaning against a girl's boobs in public.

Such a wondrous sensation from something so simple.

My heart, deserted by youth in my past life, feels rejuvenated.

Just a little more, and this oasis may soon return to mini-size perfection like Elinalise's.

In other words, right here exists twin islands where dreams are made of.

The treasure islands are right here!

Of course, not only with Sylphy.

In my left hand, Roxy's flat chest is also well cherished.

But flat doesn't mean nonexistent.

My well trained hand easily discovers the softness of Roxy.

Oh, how wonderful.

I'm thankful to my well toned muscles.

Because without them, she would merely feel half as soft.

Haha, don't be jealous of my biceps.

You're wonderful too.

"... Ufufu."

I couldn't contain my smile.

The reason we came out today was to pick presents for the sisters.

But that wasn't the only reason.

A few days ago, Elinalise told me.

"I conveyed the message. The three of you go out somewhere, and when the mood is right, find a decent hotel and do the deed."

In other words, that thing.

Today, it's happening.

The pleasure of two girls, one bed.

Will I be able to satisfy them both?

Ah, I can't wait to find out.

"Rudi, Rudi?"

Sylphy's calling brought me back to my senses.

"You're drooling. Hungry?"

Roxy wipes my lips clean with a handkerchief.

No good, no good.

Delusions overwhelming.

Of course.

Even though I'm looking forward to the endgame the most.

I have no plans to neglect the journey.

Find great gifts for Norn and Aisha.

And an enjoyable date with Sylphy and Roxy.

"Sorry, my mouth felt a little lax."

While apologizing I try to regain my focus.

Part 3

We spend a whole day looking for presents, traversing the town.

First is the craft district.

The craft district has a variety of magic items available.

Of course, the business district has magic items as well.

But the ones available there are all commercialized items, practical but expensive.

Craft district have many inexperienced magic toolmaker trainees, so a lot of their practice works can be found.

None of much use, basically all toys.

But, you might find a rare item by a future genius here too.

According to Roxy.

Seems like one of Roxy's classmates studied in the Craft District.

But unfortunately he already left town.

"Although I don't think we'll find anything for the girls here."

Despite what she said, Roxy busies herself checking out all the magic items.

Of course, I don't think we'll find Aisha and Norn anything here either.

I'm actually here to find a present for Roxy.

Even though Roxy and I already married, we never even had a wedding reception.

She said wedding ceremonies are unnecessary, but we should at least have a reception.

So I plan to celebrate it along with Aisha's and Norn's birthday.

Of course, Roxy doesn't know.

This too is a surprise.

A surprise for one that helped prepare it.

I plan to drop by in secret tomorrow, if Roxy says [I want this] here.

If it's a magic tool, it might be pricey.

Right now, my family income includes Sylphy and Roxy's wages, royalties from the scroll I got from Nanahoshi, and my share of earnings from the Labyrinth. Four income sources in all.

In particular with the last one, including the inheritance from Paul, there's enough there for us to enjoy for 30 years or so.

Not enough to squander frivolously, but plenty there.

Still, you never know when a time to use money comes.

That's why I still avoid being a big spender in everyday life.

But commemorating a wedding is an exception.

Even if Roxy said [I want a Porsche Cayenne] I would buy it for her.

But recently Roxy has been riding Jirou everywhere, so I don't think she needs a new ride.

"This pot freezes anything when you pour magic in it. It might work for Aisha?"

"I think Aisha wants something cuter."

"Ah, true, we shouldn't give her anything work-related..."

While Sylphy and Roxy discuss this and that, I carefully keep an eye on Roxy.

Until now, I have yet to find Roxy fawning over anything.

So far she has only diligently looked for gifts for Aisha and Norn.

Completely ignoring her own feelings.

"Rudi, are you looking?"

"Yes. Looking to lick Roxy all over."

"Please take this seriously. Wasn't it Rudi's idea to buy presents?"

Of course, I was thinking about presents for Norn and Aisha too.

But I think we won't find anything here also.

Part 4

We head to the business district.
Our target is the clothing store that Sylphy frequents.
The same shop where she bought me the robe.
So far, this is the most likely place to find gifts.

"This place looks really upscale."

Roxy hesitates when she saw the storefront.
She nervously checks over her own robes.
I should probably tell her that the store doesn't have a dress code.

"Eh, this is upscale?"

Sylphy tilts her head, puzzled.
When it comes to clothing, she only shops at upscale stores.
That doesn't mean she's a big spender.
Just habits she picked up from being constantly with Ariel.
You tend to shop where your friends shop.

Sylphy isn't loose with money.
She's just shopping at places she feels comfortable in.

In other words.
No one really thinks of their own stuff as upscale.

"No. This is perfectly suitable with the money in the Greyrat house. Just that I don't frequent this type of store myself."
"R-really.... it's that expensive..."

Sylphy looks dejected.
Her ears flop down.

"Eh, Rudi. Have I been spending too much money?"
"Of course not."

Sylphy's wages basically cover her clothing expenses.

She only spends her own money.
Nothing I need to chide in about.

"I definitely wasn't thinking that Sylphy was wasteful. When I was a court magician, I frequented stores like this as well. It's a great place to shop for birthday presents."
"Oh, yeah, for birthday presents... Yeah..."

Roxy adds.
As expected of my Shisho.
Instantly, she follows through.
I should help as well.

"I think clothing slightly on the expensive side is just fine."
"I think they're tasteful."
"What should we do? Maybe we should look elsewhere... But besides here, all the stores I know are expensive too."
"It's fine. We can just shop here."

Sylphy doesn't have much personal clothing in the first place.
And she's dressing up all for my sake anyways.
Even if I shouldn't thank her, I don't have any complaints either.

To be honest, from my perspective the clothing here is on the pricey side.
But that's because I'm used to wearing the cheap stuff for adventurers anyways.

Besides, just enjoy it even if they're pricey.
We have money.

"Oh, if it isn't Greyrat-sama! Welcome!"

Shop assistants circle us as soon as we arrive.
They probably recognize all their frequent guests.

"What are you looking for today?"
"Birthday presents for 10 year old girls."
"I see, come this way!"

With that said, a shop assistant immediately led us in.

They're well trained.

Our target is an area with various children's wear.

Everyday wear, robes, dresses, etc.

The options are plentiful.

I guess lots of people come to shop for 10th birthday presents here.

"So many things here I don't even know where to start."

"Winter is coming, so maybe something warm?"

Roxy and Sylphy chatting happily in front of a pile of clothing.

As expected of girls.

Completely opposite of that 'anything would do' red-haired girl.

"Um, Rudi, what do you think?"

"Norn is a little short in winter coats, maybe a new one for her?"

I gave Sylphy my opinion when she asked.

Both girls nod in approval.

"Ah, this overcoat looks quite nice... How about Aisha-chan?"

"A few days ago Aisha mentioned that her boots are feeling a bit small."

"Boots? That sounds good. Let's go with that."

Our targets decided, we begin to shop around.

With options so plentiful, we quickly found the perfect fits for both of them.

For Norn, a brightly colored overcoat; for Aisha, a pair of embroidered boots.

Both a little on the big side, but since they're still growing, it should be fine.

Afterwards we browsed the store for a little more.

I said no reason that we can only give one, since that wasn't a complete lie.

But the truth is I wanted to find a present for Roxy.

"Do you think Aisha will like this fabric brooch?"

"Yeah, she seems to like flowers."

"No, maybe it's too mature?"

"Say, what does Norn-chan like?"

"Norn... Well, I don't ever recall her talking about her likes and such..."

"Norn-san seems to like armor and horses and swords and such boyish things."

"Eh, how does Roxy know?"

"I really want to get along with her."

We walk and chat.

"..."

Suddenly, Roxy stops in her tracks.

A robe catches her eyes.

A Magician's robe and hat on prominent display.

Sized for an adult male, they're probably too big for Roxy.

Looking longingly at the hat, she removes her own.

Then, nearly in tears she stares down at her own hat.

The hat looks rather ancient in comparison.

She probably wore this back in Buina Village too.

While not in complete tatters, it's visibly frayed after being around the block a few times.

But the black coloring helps that from becoming obvious.

Roxy replaces her hat back on herself, and slowly on her tippy toes, reaches for the hat on display.

She flips it around, eventually locates the price tag, dismay befalls her face.

Instantly she puts the hat back into place.

Looks like it's too expensive.

"Sigh..."

Roxy sighs, as if nothing happened, she heads back toward me.

"Hey, Rudi."

Suddenly I noticed Sylphy besides me.

"That's it."

"Yep."

Sylphy and I are in agreement.

With that, Roxy's gift has been decided as well.

Afterwards, I placed an order for the overcoat, the boots, and secretly the hat as well before heading out.

Pick up is the day of the party.

Gift wrap is included as well.

I can't wait!

Part 5

Finally, we wander over to where the adventurers gather, the tavern district. Since we've been all over, it's already night time.

Around this time is when adventurers return with their haul from Labyrinth raids. Also, those short on cash are pawning what they have around now as well. So there are deals to be found here. But magic tools are quite pricey still, and no must-haves either. Window shopping is a pleasure in itself. But that's just me.

"Look, Sylphy. These are what adventurers wear. This is where regular folks shop."
"Okay. I get it. But I never wore clothing like these before. I don't know how I would look in them."
"I think Sylphy would look good in this. Since you're slender, this cloak should look good on you."

They chat among themselves. Before I realize it, they have an entire outfit put together for Sylphy. In the style of a magic swordsman, it even comes with an elbow protector. Lacking in elegance, but it has the charm of a new adventurer, and is actually quite cute. With this, Sylphy can become a new adventurer anytime she wants to. An F-Rank Adventurer!

Well, she has work already, so she has no need to become an adventurer. Even more, her work outfit are all magic items. So I doubt there's a chance for her to ever wear this.

"Haha, thank you."

But Sylphy looks quite happy.

While we're shopping, all the stores start to close shop. The merchants won't bother to sell into the night. Thus, we naturally walk around, and naturally we steer toward the dining area. Obviously.

The only ones natural here are Sylphy and Roxy.

Everything went according to my plan.

Knowing this will happen, I already have a place booked.

We head towards a S-Rank adventurer's tavern.

Elinalise recommended this place as "the last stop for the date."

The food is delicious, the mood is just right, the bed is wide, and the sound isolation is perfect.

That kind of place.

"Ah, grandma told me about this place. She told me to make up with Rudi here if we ever get into a fight."

"Eh, Sylphy too?"

But they already knew about this place.

In the end, we're merely three little lambs dancing in Elinalise's palm.

Still, even if we all knew, that's fine as well.

"Elinalise-san also said, one day I might come here with Rudi and Sylphy. And, when that happens, that means..."

"She told me the same thing... so that explains it."

"Rudi is a pervert!"

Sylphy and Roxy both look towards me with scorn.

But not with disgust.

Elinalise has done her job.

Thus, both have already come to terms with my scheme.

All thanks to Elinalise-san.

No, all hail Elinalise-sama!

"But we didn't say we would stay out tonight. I'm worried about Lucy."

Sylphy suddenly mentions Lucy as if she just remembered.

But, I already took care of that.

"Don't worry. I already asked Lilia-san to take care of her."

Lilia said [Count on me] as soon as I told her tonight will decide everything.

"You asked... Well, I guess she'll be fine with Lilia-san."

Sylphy probably wants to complain that parents shouldn't both disappear, even if everything's taken care of.

I understand that as well.

But, well.

... I don't have any excuses.

I'm sorry, Lucy, I love you.

Please forgive this father for being a slave to his desires.

"I... have school tomorrow."

Roxy is worried about her attendance, but I have that covered as well.

"We'll just head home a bit earlier."

"Will we get up in time? I don't have any confidence... after that."

"Count on me."

"Eh, if Rudi said so, then please..."

It'll be a tight fit, but I'm already set on spending the night out tonight.

"Then, Danna-sama. We're in your care tonight."

"Please take care of us."

My two lovely wives lower their heads. Battle preparations OK.

Part 6

But heading to bed straight away now will just be rude.

First we will have dinner in the first floor of the tavern.

The food here is indeed delicious.

Food, drinks, flirting.

Getting into the mood is important too.

My love for them goes beyond mere sexual urges.

I won't deny my urges are strong, but I still want them to enjoy a pure us-time together.

"Wow, this looks amazing."

"You can't eat this just anywhere..."

Sitting side by side in front of the cuisines being served, both exclaimed.

In the North, food is pricey and quantity lacking.

Thus, everyday meals tend to be on the plain side.

But right now, in the middle of harvest season, and at such a upscale restaurant to boot.

A rich salad made from fresh veggies.

A spicy soup, stewed with river fish.

A Black Angus steak topped with spices.

All cuisines that you can't find everyday.

In addition, a wine with a strong whiskey-like aroma.

"This soup is delicious. I wonder what flavoring they used."

"I think... mustard seed simmered in oil?"

Sylphy, concerned with Lucy, is abstaining from alcohol.

But she seems quite curious with the soup, repeatedly tasting it.

"I want to look into this a bit more. Rudi, if I make this, will you eat it?"

Sylphy tilts her tiny head.

If she does, I'll wolf it down without a doubt.

"Haha, I'll have it with a side of Sylphy."

"Seriously, Rudi."

The finale is desserts.

This restaurant offers every dessert you can think of.

Even so, for time consuming stuff like ones I had at Holy Kingdom of Milis, they'll be a little different.

The main desert is an apple-like fruit.

I had this before. Compared to apples of the past life, it's a bit sour.

Cut bite-sized and dipped in honey-like sweet syrup.

Tastes like a fruit preserve or a fruit punch.

Quite delicious.

Even though the only thing that comes to my mind with apple/honey flavor is sweet coffee, but that is my mistake.

"This is...!"

Roxy really loves the dessert.

Her eyes sparkling, and relentlessly she feasts on it.

My Sensei really loves sweets.

Or perhaps, all Migurdia Race loves sweets.

"Amazing, I can even taste something like this, this far North!"

Roxy doesn't say much, but she looks truly moved.

I feel like light is shining out of Roxy.

Like she'll start talking loudly about the jewelry box in her mouth at any moment ^[35]

"Aww..."

Finishing her dessert in an instant, Roxy looks at the empty plate filled with regret.

"You can have mine."

I push my plate towards Roxy. Astonishment overcomes her.

"Eh, really?"

Food should be eaten by those who enjoy them.

"Of course. Here, ah-ah."

"Ah- Huh? I am not a little kid anymore... Ah-ah."

Roxy takes a bite anyways. Happiness sweeps her face.

Even though I want to feed her more, but regrettably my share has disappeared as well.

Next time.

Well then, now that we have our fill.

Stuffed with sweets, these two pretty ladies turn particularly sweet as well.

"Well, ladies."

"What is it, Rudi?"

"What?"

"Actually, I already booked a room..."

I finally said the line I waited my whole life to say.

"... Oh. Well, Roxy, let me ask again... are you fine with me?"

"Yes. I'll be in your care."

Roxy and Sylphy share a glance and a nod.

I pick up a key from the lobby and rush the two into our room.

A cloth rack by the doorway, and a thick carpet cover the floor.

In the far end a large, fluffy bed big enough for five to roll in.

Darkness by the window.

I hurry to shut the blinds and light up the already-prepared candles.

Thus, in this dimly lit room the silhouettes of two lovely girls appear.

" ... "

" ... "

Blushing, both slowly remove their outer wear.

I watch, convinced again that this night will be the most wonderful night.

9 Rumors of the School - Number 8
"The Bancho is rich."

CHAPTER 9

BIRTHDAY PARTY

Part 1

Day of battle.

Norn is home that day.

Roxy is on break that day.

Even though Sylphy isn't on break, she requested the day off as well.

Preparation OK.

All that remains is the actual battle.

I call Norn, Aisha, and Roxy together.

"I have things to talk about. I hope you'll accompany me."

"What?"

Both sisters tilt their heads.

But I already informed Roxy about the surprise party.

While making food and picking up gifts from the shop, we have to take the sisters out somewhere.

"I got it. It's fine."

Roxy straightforwardly accepted the request.

Ho ho ho, she doesn't know she's part of the celebrations yet.

"Eh, mom. Can I leave my work today and go?"

"It's Rudeus-sama's invitation. Of course it's fine."

"Alright, I'm heading out."

Aisha got Lilia's permission.

"..."

Norn looks toward Sylphy, slightly bothered.

"Roxy-san is going too, so why not Sylphy-neesan?"

"Eh?"

Norn suddenly asks. Is excluding Sylphy too obvious?

"Well, you see, I have to take care of Lucy!"

"A few days ago, you left together too. Sylphy-neesan, are you fine with this?"

"W-well.."

Sylphy looks toward my direction for help.

But, as soon as she spots Roxy, I can almost see her eyes sparkle with inspiration.

"A-actually, this was my plan."

"Eh? What is?"

"Norn-chan, you don't have a good relationship with Roxy yet, right?"

"Oh, that's true."

"We're family now. It's bad if we don't get along, so I thought a chance out the house can help you two get to know each other better. If you spend some time together, you should become more comfortable with each other, right?"

"... So that's why. I get it."

Looks like Norn bought it.

On the other hand, Aisha starts to show surprise.

Because it's not like Aisha and Roxy don't get along.

When Roxy prepares her lessons, Aisha would even bring tea and snacks for her.

Those two get along just fine.

But a moment later, something seemed to click for Aisha.

With a shrug, a smile resurfaced on her.

... Did she figure it out?

"That's why, the four of you enjoy yourselves today."

"Yes."

"Okay."

"Sorry for the trouble."

Still sweating bullets, but I successfully escort those three out of the house.

Part 2

Prep work will take a lot of time.

Cooking, decorating the room, and preparing the presents with just the two of them. Just in case, we should stay out until at least the afternoon.

Even though, we can't go to the business district.

It'll be trouble if we stumble upon Sylphy on her way from picking up the presents.

Of course, we can go to the travel district or the craft district, even wasting time at school would work.

But I end up picking that place.

"Let's go fishing."

We head out the city.

And arrived at a quiet creek, far from the hustle and bustle.

In the clear creek waters many fish can be seen.

"Ah. Is this really a good way to get to know each other better?"

"What Sylphy said wasn't entirely a lie."

Roxy quietly whispers as she takes out the prepared fishing gear.

No fishing reel or artificial baits.

Just a regular wooden stick combined with spider silk from giant spiders, a simple substitute.

In addition, we have cheek pouches of Radiata Frogs as floats, and hooks of iron I fashioned.

The bait is earthworms.

"I never fished before."

"Me neither, but I always wanted to try."

The sisters pick their own gear as they say that.

Aisha quickly installs her hook and floats, prepares the bait, and runs besides the creek.

Then she casts her fishing rod out like Sanpei. ^[36]

Has she really never fished before?

"Nii-san, what am I supposed to do?"

"Hehe, Nii-san doesn't know either. I never fished before."

In my previous life, I was an indoor-type.

Never fished before, never interested in fishing either.

Of course, after coming to this world I never fished either.

If I want fish, I can just freeze this creek and call it a day.

"Then, Norn-san. Can I teach you?"

Roxy nervously offers to help.

Looks like she has some experience.

If she doesn't, it would be fun to experiment between the 3 of us too. Since she offered, I'll join the lesson as well.

"... Please."

With some mixed feelings Norn nods.

As a Milis believer, I guess she really does have some reservations about Roxy.

But, she probably doesn't hate Roxy herself.

"-- Okay, now try it yourself."

"Like this?"

"Yep. Good job."

"... Thank you."

Roxy's teachings are detailed.

Norn listens carefully.

Good, good.

I also hope that Roxy and Norn will get along.

Part 3

Then we start fishing.

Roxy has a wealth of experience.

What I mean is, she looks so cool.

Sitting on a chair I made with earth magic, with one hand on the rod, her eyes focus only on the water surface.

In that pose, she looks just like a monk in meditation.

Then when even the tiniest vibration reaches her hand, she will pull the rod.

Although at the beginning she swung empty, but by this point she's far in the lead.

"Roxy-san is so good at this."

"When I was traveling alone, I had to learn to catch food on my own."

"Oh yeah, in his travels, Ruijerd-san caught fish as well."

"He can fish?"

"No, with a spear, he just stabs the water, and comes back with two or three fish--"

Norn sits by Roxy's side, making casual conversations.

Still a bit wooden, but the mood is there.

"Ah, Norn-san, you got a bite. Try to pull!"

"Eh, Eh! oh, oh! Ah.."

"This happens pretty often. Bait it and try again."

Norn keeps losing focus and managed to let another one go.

But Roxy seems to be enjoying herself, with a topic relevant to her, her mood visibly brightens.

"Haha, Onii-chan. You don't look so good there. Something wrong?"

Aisha is in her best shape.

Although she swung empty a few times, she already caught 3.

"Don't forget, we promised that the loser has to listen to the winner's commands."

Earlier, I accepted Aisha's challenge to see "who will catch more fish," but so far my results are 0.

Looks like I'll lose.

Well, doesn't matter if I do.

But, even though we are both beginners, why is the gap between us that large?
Aisha is great no matter what she does.

"Only stuff within my abilities."

"What should I choose? Hold me tight all night and whisper sweet nothings like 'Aisha is cute'? Or maybe the stuff you do with Roxy-ane and Sylphy-ane?"

"No perverted stuff. Dad will get mad."

"Don't bring dad into this-"

She might say that, but in the end she'll probably ask for something expensive anyways.

Well, losing is fine.

I can let my sister win this time.

No.

Isn't this a chance to show myself off as the cool older brother?

Rather than a gentle, unreliable brother, I want to be a strong and reliable one!

"Aisha, I'll now show my true form."

"So you haven't been taking it seriously?"

"Haha, from now on, I'll use my Demon Eye!"

"Ehh, that's cheating!"

Whatever you say.

This is my true form.

It might be just a second into the future, but that should be enough for me to demonstrate the overwhelming skill gap between us.

I open my Demon Eye.

And focus on my float.

<No reaction.>

<No reaction.>

<The float begins to shake.>

"Fiiish!"

A swing honed through daily sword practice.
Wrist strength enhanced by an artificial limb that ignores any resistance.
With a bit of force I pull up the hook.

"Oh! It's a big one..?"

I hooked a boot.

"..."

Boot exists in this world too?
Well, this creek sits downstream from Magic City Sharia.
People often come to it to wash and fetch water.
So sometimes, for whatever reason, a boot falls in and gets lost.
Or maybe further upstream somewhere, an adventurer lost it, and it traveled downstream. That is possible too.

"Onii-chan..."

Aisha looks at me in shame.

No, let's change our thought process a little.
This isn't a boot.
That would work.
Yep.
If I think about it, this looks like something else entirely.
Yep.
Looking carefully, isn't this a fish?
Indeed, calling it a fish isn't completely unreasonable.
It looks like a fish no matter how you look at it.
It looks like nothing else besides fish.

Thus I put the boot inside the fish tank.

"Alright, that's 1. I'll catch up soon enough."

"Hey! That was a boot!"

"It might look like a boot at first glance, but it's actually a very respectable fresh water creature. I call it... Shoe Fish."

"You're so full of it! There's no such thing! That's cheating!"

Aisha plunges a hand in the fish tank and tosses the boot back in the creek.

"Ahh!"

Don't throw trash in the creek.

Well, no. That's catch and release.

The boot is just a baby.

If we let it go now, it'll definitely work back to the ocean and eventually return.

I'll go with that.

"Ah! Oh... Got it! That's No. 4."

While I was busy thinking, Aisha has already caught her fourth.

Ugh.

I'll lose for sure now.

Sorry Sylphy and Roxy.

I'm Aisha's bed warmer tonight...

"Just like that, very good. Now pull, pull!"

"Arg... Grr... Ah!"

"Do your best. Careful!"

Getting noisy all the sudden, I turn over to look, Norn got a bite.

A big one!

Almost the size of a Koi fish.

"Wow! I caught one! First time I ever caught one!"

"Wow! And it's so big too!"

Norn laughs happily. Roxy claps her hand in excitement too.

Such a heartwarming scene.

This trip was worth it.

Part 4

Just like that, the sun begins to set, and it's time to head home.

"We should head back soon."

The sisters begin to drag their feet as soon as they hear me.

"Eh, going home already?"

"... I want to catch another one."

Time flies by when you have fun.

I can appreciate them wanting to spend more time here.

But the real deal awaits.

"If it gets dark, monsters will come out."

"We're fine, if Onii-chan is here!"

"Roxy-Sensei said so too..."

Indeed there's no concern with magical beasts in this area.

Roxy and I.

Us two should be plenty to protect Aisha and Norn.

Right now I should have that kind of strength.

But that's a different issue.

If I agree, we'll be here all night.

Even if we don't have plans later, better safe than sorry.

"No. We'll come again next time."

"Onii-chan is just bitter you didn't catch anything..."

"If I want to be serious, I can catch as many fish as I like."

I can use electric shock and explosions, no reason that I have to hook them.

Definitely not because I'm a sore loser.

"Alright, let's go home."

"Fine-"

"Fine."

I use magic to flash freeze the fish we caught to take them home.
On the way back, I thought about frying and eating them, but it's better if we go to the party hungry.
Fish can wait until tomorrow.

On the way back.
Aisha and Norn are arguing happily about who caught more, whose were bigger.
Roxy and I follow behind.
Roxy has a face of success.
Her relationship with Norn had been a little tense.
After today, it should improve a little.

"We're back~!"
"Congratulations!"

Clapping hands the moment we came into the house.
Sparse but energetic claps.
Sylphy and Lilia, also Zenith lining up near the entrance.
Although Zenith can only stare blankly, but maybe it's just my imagination, but I feel a smile from her.

"Eh?"

Norn sounds shocked by the ambush.
Cooperating, Roxy and I begin to clap behind them as well.
Norn turns her head around and makes another [Eh?] sound.
Doesn't look like she figured it out yet.

I hurry the confused Norn and surprised Aisha into the dining room.

The room is dressed in simple but pretty decorations.
No banners hanging, but the wall has been decorated with flowers.
In various places candles shine.
Covered with a white tablecloth, a flower vase and dinner plates line the table.
Drinks were prepared, but no food.
They'll probably be served later.

By the table.

Two so-called birthday chairs have been prepared.
I ask them to sit down there.

"Eh? Why?"

Norn shows a face of surprise.
But Aisha begins to giggle.
So she figured it out.
What a clever girl.

After they sit down, Lilia and Zenith sat down as well.
Sylphy and Roxy sit on their regular seats.
After everyone sat down, I clear my throat.

"It's been seven years since the Metastasis Event. A long time has passed, and the family has finally been reunited. Even though dad is gone, and whether mom will recover her memory is still up in the air. But, if we stay gloomy like this, dad will never be able to rest in peace. I think if dad were with us right now, he would be all smiles too. It was dad's last wish to have everyone gather and celebrate together. So today, following his will, let's enjoy ourselves. Cheers!"

With that said, I raise a toast.

"Cheers!"

Besides Norn, everyone else quietly raises their cups.
Norn is still in a daze.
But Aisha seems to understand completely, grinning happily.

Say, I was trying to be cheerful, but somehow my eyes are welling up.
No no.
I need to be smiling.

"Sylphy!"
"Ah, right."

Sylphy hears my call and immediately begins to move.
We're on the same wavelength.

Sylphy takes them out from under the table.
Two large, beautifully wrapped boxes.
Sylphy hands one to Roxy.

Then Sylphy and Roxy each take one to Aisha and Norn.

"Happy 10th!"
"Happy birthday!"

Norn and Aisha both look completely baffled.

"But, we're already 11...?"

First time I have ever seen Aisha so baffled.
From the look on her face, even Aisha didn't expect that she would be receiving a present.

"Um. We didn't have a chance to celebrate for your 10th. Even though it's a little late, but Paul said within a year is fine."
"Onii-chan...?"

Aisha looks rather moved, hanging tightly to the box.
Then, she looks towards Lilia.
Lilia gently nods towards Aisha.
Aisha, unable to contain her excitement any longer, turns back to Sylphy.

"Can I open it?"
"Of course!"

With that said, Aisha and Norn begin to move.
Ready to tear through the wrapping paper.
But, in sync, they suddenly realize something.
Then slowly they unwrapped the ribbons and remove the pretty wrapping paper.
No clue why they're so in sync right now.
They really are sisters.

"Wah~, boots! Norn-ane what did you get?"
"Look, Aisha, I got a jacket!"

Looking over their presents, they laugh happily.
With them so happy, even us givers feel gratified.

Then, Lilia and Zenith come beside them.

"Mom, mama! Look look!"

Norn shows off her new jacket to Zenith.
As expected, no reaction from Zenith.

I feel a little pained seeing this.
Zenith used to be so frolicky in these situations.
She was so excited for my 5th, [How is it? I know exactly what Rudi wanted, right?]
with those feelings she gave me a book as present.
If she was her normal self.
Then she would definitely be riled up like a little kid with Norn.

But the Zenith right now.
Looks blank.
Seeing that, I feel glum.
If she ever recovers and hears about Paul's death, will she show any pain?
But still, seeing her completely emotionless right now, it makes my chest hurt.

While I was thinking, just a for a brief moment--.

-- Zenith smiled.

"... Eh?"

And quickly her smile disappears.
Just for a moment.
Maybe only I saw it.

"Did she just... smile?"

No.
Everyone saw it.
Lilia, Aisha, Sylphy, Roxy too.
Everyone looking towards Zenith in shock.

"... Mother?"

The one that witnessed that smile face-to-face, with wide open eyes, tears gushing out as Norn looks at Zennith.

"..."

Zenith follows up by petting Norn and Aisha on their heads.

That rubbing is gentler than usual.

Zenith is very happy too.

Because her daughters are growing up.

"Madam... thank goodness..."

Lilia quietly holds on to Zenith's shoulder.

On Lilia a tear-filled smiling face she rarely showed.

Zenith with a blank expression rubs Lilia's hand.

Lilia bites her lips as to hold back her tears.

"These are from Madam and I."

After taking Zenith back to her seat, Lilia turns around to give the girls their presents.

A pair of matching handkerchiefs with pretty flowers embroidered.

"Thank you very much. Lilia-san."

Norn candidly accepts hers, but Aisha looks hesitant.

Does getting the same thing make her uncomfortable?

"Em, mother, can I accept this?"

"Oh, of course. You are also Paul-sama's daughter."

The mood has changed somehow.

Lilia has always been instructing Aisha of her role as a maid.

"From today too, please continue to serve Rudeus-sama and Norn-sama with respect."

"... Yes, mother."

Ah, Lilia is still Lilia.

But even saying that, recently, whether in the tone of her voice or whatever, I have never seen her sternly lecturing Aisha. She has her own thought process.

After Lilia returns to her seat, Zenith places a hand on her shoulder.

"Madam..."

"..."

Lilia puts her own on Zenith's hand and quietly thanks her.

"Thank you very much."

They seem to have reached a level of understanding beyond words. Roxy seems deeply moved by this scene.

"Oh?"

Someone tugged my sleeves while I was looking at Roxy. I turn around to check, and it turns out to be Sylphy. In her hand a different box than the sisters'.

Oh yeah.
I almost forgot.

"Roxy."

Roxy turns her head. She looks at me and the box in Sylphy's hands, puzzled.

"W-what is it?"

Sylphy says,

"Oh, this, is our present to Roxy."

"Eh, ha, eh, that, what for?"

"A wedding present. Roxy, congratulations on you and Rudi getting married!"

Sylphy, with that said, hands the box to Roxy.

"Come on now, open it."

Roxy under her urges opens the box.
And seeing the hat within, her eyes widen.

"This, Sylphy, Rudi, Is this?"

"Roxy. Let's live happily together, just like Zenith-san and Lilia-san."

Sylphy has the smile of an angel.
Roxy bites her lips, seeing that smile.
And with her head slightly lowered, pressing the hat tightly against her bosom.
Then, with a voice almost too faint to hear, she says.

"Truly, thank you, Sylphy..."

Tears sparkle in Roxy's eyes.
Afterwards she told me.
That moment was the first time that Roxy truly felt Sylphy's approval.



Part 5

The party was smooth sailing afterwards.

First the cake was presented.

Baked soft, like a sponge, but no butter.

Lots of dried fruits inside.

Even though it had a slightly bitter aftertaste, but the fruits sweetness covered it well.

I remember eating it at Asura Kingdom before.

During my 10th as well.

How nostalgic.

Is Eris doing well?

That girl is lively no matter what her circumstances.

But will she be married like me... Probably not.

If there's a guy that can handle her, he has my deepest respect.

I asked Lilia about the cake, and apparently it's a traditional snack of Asura Kingdom.

Prepared for every holiday.

But we never had it at Buina Village.

Seems like Paul hated it, so she never could make it then.

Likes, hates, that's Paul for you.

Sylphy learned how to make it this time, so she'll make more herself in the future.

Norn really enjoys the flavor, and I don't dislike it either.

But Aisha seems not particularly fond of it, trying to pick off the dried fruits and eating only the cake itself.

Lilia doesn't look very pleased, angrily telling her not to be picky, while saying "you remind me of your father" with a smile.

Aisha says playfully, [Onii-chan, help me eat this], but she caught the attention of Roxy's sweet tooth.

They probably will enjoy sharing with each other.

I watch with a light heart.

But Roxy seems to have a misunderstanding.

"Aisha-san. You don't realize how lucky you are. There are times when one gets so hungry that one has to even eat poisonous scorpions."

"Oh, ah, okay."

And the lecture begins.

Feels like Ghyslaine had said this as well.

Even I had to force myself to swallow some terrible meals during my time in the Magic Continent.

But I don't think I actually ate anything poisonous before.

I suppose I also have no clue how lucky I am.

"Don't waste any of your sweets. Treasure them."

"Okay."

Not angry, yet very convincing, even Aisha got scared.

Then, quietly she works through her cake.

Thinking about it, this feels like the first time Aisha actually does as she's told.

No, she always does anything I say.

But if you think about it, being picky isn't that big of a deal.

It's only cake.

But I could be wrong.

As expected of Roxy.

"But if you really can't finish it, I'll help."

Roxy has already finished hers.

Oh.

As expected of Roxy.

"I really can't eat anymore."

Aisha replies immediately.

Scared that Roxy will lecture her again, she replies immediately.

"No! Eat it yourself!"

Sylphy and I never really scold Aisha.

Perhaps as a result, Lilia starts to refrain herself as well.

Aisha is clever, but she's only 11.
She deserves to be scolded once a while.

Roxy is getting along better with the sisters.
Slowly but surely Norn and Aisha ceased fighting.
Zenith's condition is definitely improving.

I feel like the family ties are growing closer than before.
Party successful.

Ah, parties are truly wonderful.
Norn and Aisha.
Let's have an even better party for their 15th!

9 Rumors of the School - Number 9
"The Bancho is bald." [37]

CHAPTER 10

GRADUATION CEREMONY

Part 1

In the blink of an eye a year has passed.
The season changed, and winter returns.

I am 18 already.
On the school side I safely advanced a grade and will be a 4th year soon.
Research has been going well, nothing major to report.

Even though I successfully advanced, Elinalise was forced to repeat a grade.
Because she left for half a year even though she's a regular student.
Even though she doesn't really mind, but because it was for my family troubles, I feel a little responsible.

By the way, Sylphy has poor attendance too, but her grades are the best in school.
And since she's also Princess Ariel's personal guard, she successfully advanced a grade as well.

Of course, everything's fine on the family side as well.
Lucy is growing well.
She weaned really early and is now wolfing down baby food.

And a few days ago, out of no where.
She call me "Ru- Di-" for the first time.
Not "papa," not "daddy," not "Mr. Bubbles," ^[38] but Rudi.
Well, no one calls me papa at home, so it can't be helped.
Yet she calls Sylphy "Ma- Ma-," but that's because of Sylphy's parenting skills.
Maybe I should change my first name to "papa."
No, in the end she's learning to talk.
I shouldn't be impatient.
When she grows bigger she'll definitely call me father.
Ah, say, why is the girl already talking after barely a year?

Is my daughter a genius?

No, even I know this is normal.

Sooner or later kids start to talk.

Sylphy and Lilia have been diligently teaching her to talk, so this is the fruit of their labor.

But still, my girl is talking already, I can't help but think "amazing!"

But, at this rate, soon she'll start saying stuff like "I don't want my panties washed with papa's."

I can't wait!

With Lucy grown, Sylphy has stopped lactating as well.

That sweet, delicate flavor that tastes of excitement, is gone.

A pity, but it can't be helped.

At the same time, her enlarged bosom has returned to its normal size.

Small isn't bad either, but I feel a tinge of loneliness that the bonus time is over.

Also, since we no longer need a wet nurse, our contract with Suzanne ended.

This too is fate. If she is ever in need, I will try to lend a hand.

Like if her children are to attend school, then I'll help where I can.

But by then, I might have graduated already. I might have to ask Norn instead.

Norn and Aisha are both doing well.

They both exclaim in one voice over how cute Lucy is.

From their perspective, she definitely feels like a little sister.

I also overheard them having a strategy session behind the ladder^[39], "Don't fight in front of Lucy."

Besides that, they also have various other plans.

Mostly about how to show off as cool big sisters, something like that.

Recently, things have rarely gone ugly between them.

People naturally become more respectable once they have someone looking up to them.

If because of Lucy, they're willing to make up, that'd be wonderful.

Roxy's teaching career is going well.

For some reason regular students are a little scared of her.

She doesn't seem to have any bad students in class, and for now is enjoying a happy teaching life.

Zenith remains the same.

Sometimes eating with Norn, sometimes weeding with Aisha.

Sometimes holding Lucy's fingers and smiling.

Also, after Aisha's and Norn's birthday party, Zenith started to smile quite often.

A small, delicate smile, barely twitching her muscles.

But anyone can tell that it's a smile.

She still can't talk, and otherwise almost expressionless.

But indeed she's recovering well.

That I believe.

Part 2

Today is the Graduation Ceremony.

Even though the Entrance Ceremony was outdoors, the Graduation Ceremony is indoors.

Until today I had yet to enter such a large lecture hall before.

In it a large stage is installed, and one by one each graduate receives their graduation certificate.

Around 500 in total at most.

Even though the student body exceeds 10,000, graduates only number in the 500s.

I'm afraid this 7th year class was almost 2000 to begin with.

As they advance each year, one by one students quit, until only these remain.

Easy to enroll, hard to graduate.

Advanced Rank Magic and Melded Magic are very difficult, so many people failed to advance due to low magic power.

And for others, even those with talent, think just learning Elementary Magic is good enough.

And there are probably plenty of others quitting for various reasons.

But since I'm a Special Student, the school has been taking good care of me.

Teachers line up beside the graduates.

Around a thousand in all.

Feels like there are more here than the graduates.

Realistically, there are two, maybe three hundred teachers at most.

But that's already plenty.

Makes sense that the faculty rooms take up an entire building.

Among them, that particularly small figure is Roxy.

Even from afar she seems to glow, and I spot her immediately.

By the way.

Regular students have today off.

Entrance and exit ceremonies are both voluntary.

Not just that, attendance needs special permissions.

As if the ceremony itself is a special privilege.

I stand besides the Student Council.

The Student Council is in full attendance.

But I only know 4 among them: Luke, Ariel and her two attendants.

Also Sylphy too.

At work Sylphy looks so forbidding as always.

Not long ago Sylphy was often mistaken for a boy.

But now her hair has reached shoulder length, and maybe because she has become a mother, her femininity has really begun to show.

Like a career woman.

Cute and cool.

Makes me want to loudly declare to the world, that she's my wife!

But there's a surprise too.

Norn is sitting at the back with the Student Council.

I never heard about this.

Don't tell me she joined the Student Council?

Not official this year, but officially in the next term?

If she plans to announce it at the Entrance Ceremony, as a brother I'll be very happy.

"Graduate representative! Rinia Dedorudia! And Pursena Adorudia! It's an honor to bestow you two these graduation certificates and Magic Guild D Rank confirmation."

Rinia and Pursena were selected as graduate representatives.

Even though they had gone astray at times, they ended up with excellent grades in the end.

Besides, they're Beast Race princesses of Dorudia Village.

Status-wise there's no complaints.

It's only expected.

When selecting graduate representatives, high social status is an obvious criteria.

If between commoner and nobility, the choice is obviously nobility.

This way there's less trouble, and it won't hurt the noble's feelings.

Of course if a commoner's grades are better by a wide margin, then that's another story.

Roxy was outstanding too, but I don't think she was selected as representative.

Officially, the Magic University takes pride in welcoming all kinds of students.

But as a human enterprise, informal rules still exist.

"Rinia Dedorudia. It's an honor."

"Pursena Adorudia. It's an honor."

"May you venture on the path of magic."

Rinia and Pursena stand up looking majestic.

They step up on the stage and receive their graduation certificates with class.

During mating season, suitors popped up everywhere to confess their love, but they were all beaten senseless.

Standing atop countless corpses, murmuring [We are too strong ~nya] [Merely empty words ~nano], that awe-inspiring sight still floats vividly inside my head.

The image of a king.

I see shadows of king of beasts behind their silhouettes. ^[40]

That night they spent their time in the tavern saying, [We don't need no man ~nya!] [That's right, men can get fucked ~nano!] and drowned themselves in alcohol.

Part 3

After the Graduation Ceremony wraps up, I drop by Nanahoshi's research lab.

"Cough, cough"

Nanahoshi is coughing and wrapped up like a ladybug.

"Another cold?"

"Cough... looks like it."

Nanahoshi's health has been pretty bad this past year.

Always with a dry cough or a fever.

Every time I will cure her with Detoxification Magic.

And soon after she'll get sick again.

"Maybe you should start living a bit healthier."

Nanahoshi basically never leaves the room.

She will go outside when necessary, but she basically spent the whole year in the lab.

She'll go to the cafeteria for lunch, but that's about it.

Breakfast and dinner are just leftovers, everyday a repeat of this unhealthy lifestyle.

Of course eventually her immune system will deteriorate, and she becomes easily sick.

I don't want to tell her off, but she needs to take better care of herself.

"At least until your cold gets better, how about a little break?"

"Research is going well, so I shouldn't stop right now."

After she said that, she turns towards a magic circle.

Nanahoshi's research has indeed been going well.

Few months ago Phase 2 was successfully completed.

Summoned matching cap for the PET bottle from Phase 1.

Now is Phase 3.

Summon a living being, like a plant or small animal.

That's currently underway.

Just a bit more, and vegetables from the previous world may soon appear in this one.

Going well indeed.

"Today let's begin the Phase 3 experiment."

"Shouldn't we wait for Cliff and Zanoba to be here?"

"Ah, right. Then, can you go get them?"

I shake my head.

"Sorry, they have the day off."

"Both on break? How rare, what's the occasion?"

"Graduation Ceremony."

"Graduation... Ah, is it that time already?"

Nanahoshi frowns.

She doesn't want to hear about the graduation ceremony.

Because that marks another year she's stuck in this world.

"Rinia and Pursena both graduated. They both plan to head home, so I want to have a farewell party for them. Please come as well."

"... Eh, fine."

Rinia and Pursena are among Nanahoshi's few female friends.

Even though friends might be pushing it, but as farewell, she should participate as well.

They seem to get along better than before.

"They will probably become princesses when they get back."

"I can't see it."

"True."

Will Dorudia Clan really be alright with those girls as matriarchs?

Well, even if they don't look it, it should be fine if they're recognized as such.

They should be fine.

- Knock knock!*

While I was thinking, a door knock.

"... Em? Come in."

"Excuse me ~nya."

"I'm coming in ~nano."

Two familiar faces come in.

A cheeky cat and a drowsy dog.

Rinia and Pursena. Walk in majestically in their uniforms.

"Boss, we were looking for you ~nya."

"Please grant us your presence ~nano."

But they feel different than usual.

What's different?

Is it because Rinia looks a little jittery?

Or because Pursena isn't chewing some meat with her mouth?

The same feeling as our initial meeting.

Their usual self would be joking around like [Flirting in another girl's room when Fitts and Roxy-sama are not looking again ~nya.] [She'll get angry ~nano.] But right now they don't feel so light-hearted.

Another duel?

Settling the score before graduating?

... I don't really like to fight to be honest.

"Boss, please ~nya."

"Please ~nano."

Simple words, but I can feel their determination.

From their eyes I can see their conviction.

They won't leave if they lose. Don't tell me that's what they have in mind?

They have their own pride.

Well, fine.

Since this is the end.

I'll play along.

I too am a man.

It'd be bad if they decide to do something to Sylphy instead.

"I understand. Nanahoshi, I'll leave for a bit."

"Wait, what about the experiment?"

Nanahoshi looks obviously angry.
But Rinia grabs her shoulder.

"You come too ~nya. Special permission ~nya."
"Permitted ~nano."

"Wait, hold on. Why?"

They want Nanahoshi as their witness?
I doubt Nanahoshi plans to testify for anyone.
But Silent Seven Star is pretty famous.
Having her as witness is definitely trustworthy.

Part 4

The scene changes to one of the school's empty fields.
A required stop on the way to the student residences.
Because it tightly hugs the forest, and is covered in snow, it's rather well hidden.

"This will work ~nya."
"... How nostalgic ~nano."

This was once the location where Zanoba and I staged our kidnapping of Rinia and Pursena.
The first time we fought was here, so in some ways a place filled with memories.

And it's in this place, Rinia and Pursena stand before me.
Standing around ten paces from each other.
Facing each other.
Not me.
... Eh?

"We hope Boss and Nanahoshi will be our witnesses ~nya."
"For what?"
"Rinia and I will decide once and for all who is stronger ~nano."

In other words, a duel between Rinia and Pursena.

"Why?"
"The winner becomes head of Dorudia Clan ~nya."
"But I thought Dedorudia and Adorudia are separate tribes, so there's no need for that?"

If I remember correctly.
Although I only spent time in Dorudia Village, but I remember hearing about Adorudia Village before.
But, there can only be one clan head.
So the [Dorudia Clan, Clan Head] oversees all the different tribes?

"That was what we thought at first ~nya."

"But recently we changed our mind ~nano. The world is huge ~nano. There's more to life than just being clan head ~nano."

"We have sisters too ~nya. We can teach them what we learned from school even if there's only one of us going back ~nya."

"Living a free life is more fun than becoming clan head ~nano."

This again?

What should I say.

How aimless and irresponsible.

You know, becoming clan head has been their life's dream, what happened to them that changed their minds?

"Either way, we'll have to fight when we get back ~nya."

"If we lose in the Great Forest, then we'll be forced into a boring life ~nano. They'll make us marry the strongest warrior in the village ~nano."

"In that case, why not decide it once for all right here, and walk a different path ~nya."

"That way we won't have any regrets ~nano."

So clan head remains as their ultimate goal.

And if they can't reach it, then live an interesting life outside of the Great Forest.

Is that how it works?

Eh, there's too many holes in this story.

Rather, a lot of problems.

For one, this isn't something for you to decide.

But this is not my time to lecture them.

They spent a lot of time thinking this through before coming to their decision.

Hating being tied down at home, wanting to live a free life, I can sympathize with them.

"I get it. In that case I won't stop you. Go ahead."

"Is that fine? Letting them fight it out?"

Nanahoshi doesn't look very happy.

She's just a regular high school girl.

She probably doesn't want to see her friends fight.

"Even if I refuse to watch, they'll fight anyways."

They're probably evenly matched.
Without a judge, they might not be able to decide a winner.
If something were to happen, then they need a 3rd party to step in.
They definitely need a witness.

Also, Nanahoshi isn't entirely correct, this isn't a fight, this is a duel.
A "duel" to decide a "winner."

"I appreciate it ~nya."
"Thank you very much ~nano."

Rinia and Pursena both give their thanks.

Then, again face to face, deep breaths.
And stare down one another.

"Hsss!"
"Grrr!"

Menacing sounds that should not be possible for young maidens emit from them,
checking each other.
Tension fills the air.
It'll start at any moment.
I open my Demon Eye, and Nanahoshi wears a ring, a magic item.
Starting now, these wild beasts will seriously try to kill each other.

"Pursena. I've been meaning to tell you for a long time now, I have always hated you ~nya."
"That's my line ~nano. Since Rinia was a baby you always stuck to my back ~nano. You're just a little sister, and now you dare to say that ~nano?"
"Ha?! You're the little sister ~nya. Remember how when we're 4, Pursena, you pissed your pants and I helped you hide it ~nya? Adorudia never forgets a favor, so that was all talk ~nya."
"It got wet because I was saving Rinia from drowning ~nano. Drowning, even though Dedorudia are supposed to be so graceful, how embarrassing ~nano."
"That only happened because Pursena dropped the toy we borrowed from grandpa in the river ~nya!"
"The one that dropped it was Rinia ~nano!"

What is this?
I don't feel a bit of hate in this argument.
Anger, hostility, such feelings well up.
But not an ounce of hate between them.
Purposely bringing out old grudges to taunt each other.
Like they can't go through with this if they don't.

"Pursena is a cry baby!"
"Rinia is an idiot!"

They continue tossing insults at each other.
Then it becomes juvenile.

"Pursena is a dummy!"
"Rinia is a shorty!"
"Wha...! Pursena is a fatty!"
"Ha, I am not fat!"

The one that breaks is Pursena.
The moment fat comes up, she snaps.

"Garr!"

Pursena leaps forward.
Plunging at Rinia with fist clenched.

"Haa!"

With cat-like reflexes Rinia reacted.
Countering with a similar punch.

"Grr..."
"Ha..."

Evenly matched.
They stagger apart... the duel finally begins.



Part 5

"Ah! Pursena lunges forward!

But Rinia dodges gracefully!

Pursena pursues after Rinia like a heavy tank!

Rinia uses hit & run tactics to counter Pursena's attack!

Pursena might be stronger, but Rinia has the advantage of speed!

Rinia has no chance of winning in a direct battle!

But strength alone can't guarantee victory!

If she can't catch her opponent, then that strength won't do a thing!

Pursena fires a brilliant kick at Rinia! Jab! Straight!

Rinia is too far! It wasn't effective! Just a step short!

Ahh! A straight from Pursena blows up Rinia!

Rinia is staggering! Pursena presses her attack!

What will you do, Rinia? Run? Or will you take a stand?

Rinia chooses to stand and counter!

Left jab! Another Jab! A super fast jab!

Pursena is getting exhausted!

Rinia is the same!

Strength-wise she might have a disadvantage, but she won't back down!

Pursena withdraws, but her eyes shone like a foxhound!

Pursena attacks from Rinia's right...!

Ah-! Pursena is bleeding!

Did Rinia pull out a knife?

No! It's her claws! Rinia has extended her claws and scratched Pursena with her punches!

Such a sharp cat attack!

But it isn't playing dirty! It's a fight with everything you got!

Rinia extends her claws, punch! Another punch! A left, right barrage!

An entirely different pain from Pursena's hard knuckles!

Suffering, Pursena covers her face..!

Ah! Rinia's claws are tearing Pursena's cloth apart!

You can almost see parts that shouldn't be seen!

But! Pursena lets out a roar! She's fine!

Pursena lands a hook on Rinia!

Rinia winces in pain, a direct hit!

Is Pursena going to win? Is it already decided?"

"Since they can use anything, then why not use magic?"

"Yes. Such close combat preclude any possibility of a magic battle. Because they immediately close the distance, there's no chance for incantation. If it was Sylphy and I, we might be able with voiceless invocation, but those two can only fist fight. In these kind of anaerobic activity, even basic words become difficult to say. Imagine asking a marathoner to sing as he runs. Impossible, right? Same idea--"

"That makes sense. Sorry for interrupting your commentary. Please continue."

"... Rinia stops moving!

Infighting! A classic infight! ^[41]

It's looking bad for Rinia! Pursena's punches have thrown her off her pace!

Hit & run has become impossible!

Has Rinia become a butterfly without her wings? Will she be trampled on the ground by the victor?

No, Because!

Look! Miss! Rinia dodged!

Rinia uses her cat-like reflexes and dodged!

A counter! Cat punch smash!

She scratched Pursena's cheek! Blood splattering! With a bounce Pursena tries to leap away!

Rinia presses on!

Rinia presses on!

A Brazilian High Kick right at the knockers!

Ah-! Pursena! It connected with Pursena!

Wait, I see teeth! Pursena somehow managed to bite the leg that was aiming for her head!

That's right, she's a wolf! Not knuckles, she has teeth!

Just like Pursena has Rinia on the ground, smashed her down!

Is Rinia done?

But Pursena isn't the only one with teeth!

Rinia flashes her shiny teeth and bites back!

A death match between two beasts!"

"All I see is a mess of a fight..."

"Well, yeah, that's true too."

"Hey, can I ask a question?"

"Sure."

"Those two are fighting so desperately, but why are you having so much fun with it?"

"Sorry."

Part 6

It was a long struggle.
First the insults fly, then the battle begins.
The beginning was highly skilled close combat.
But ended with them rolling around biting and scratching like kids.

An intense struggle.
Like playing on the snow as they fought.
Then, at some point, they stop.

And then only one stands.

"I won ~nano..."

It's Pursena.
Her body covered in cuts.
Her cloth torn, wet with snow, stained with blood.
Bite and scratch marks cover her body, dripping with blood.
A fierce figure.
A proud figure.
It's a figure that has overcome mortal combat.

"..."

Pursena sneers down at the Rinia still lying on the ground.
For a brief moment showing some mixed emotions, then turns away.

"I won ~nano."
"Ah, um. Congratulations... Sit down, both of you let me heal you."

I place a hand on her shoulder as I finish, but she flicks it off.

"These scars are my pride, so I want to keep them all ~nano."
"Thank you, but that's not necessary ~nya."
"Really?"

Pride?

They were serious.

Somewhere along the way, I thought they weren't, how embarrassing.

"I don't know if I'll see Rinia again, a pity ~nano."

"No, but you should at least have more chances before leaving?"

"No ~nano. This is goodbye ~nano. We already packed up, and are leaving today ~nano."

So everything was decided already.

From now on they'll go their separate ways, and today decided everything.

Somehow, so cool.

Then, better not have that farewell party.

Feels like it'll ruin the mood.

"... No healing magic is fine, but how about I dress the wounds?"

"I got it ~nano."

I watch Pursena as she staggers towards the student housing.

Then suddenly, Nanahoshi chases after her.

She covers Pursena under her own jacket and lends her a shoulder to lean on.

Nanahoshi has a gentle side too.

... Okay, next.

"Still alive?"

I look down at Rinia on the ground.

She hasn't lost consciousness.

Just staring blankly up the sky.

"Still alive ~nya."

She's also a mess.

Just as bad as Pursena.

Her cloth torn with bite marks.

Blood from her shoulder stain the snow red.

Maybe because she took too many punches, her entire face is swollen.

Spitting blood, but there should be no internal damage, just a few cuts in her mouth.

"Ruining something so beautiful."

"True ~nya."

Suddenly I noticed, I can see Rinia's figure between her torn cloth.

Hard not to stare.

I take my jacket and put it over her.

But it is rather cold.

Nanahoshi lent her jacket too. Hopefully her cold won't get worse.

"Thank you ~nya."

Rinia wobbles to put her head under her hands.

Lying on the ground relaxed, with her legs crossed.

"Ahah... I lost ~nya."

White vapor flies upward with every word.

"It was a beautiful fight."

"What beautiful fight ~nya? Boss's voice, we can hear everything ~nya. You were enjoying yourself ~nya."

Um.

Well, I should have read the mood.

But it was an exciting fight.

A cat fight.

I mean, a passionate struggle between warriors under the limelight.

No, if I make it a competition she might get mad again.

"Well, what's important in the end is be happy ~nya."

"Now I feel bad."

"It's fine ~nya. For outsiders it'll just look like a quarrel ~nya. Be happy ~nya."

With that said, Rinia covers her face.

Must be licking her wounds.

"You're not going to use healing magic?"

"These are scars of a loser, so honestly I want them gone, but I will endure it this time ~nya. These kind of things will eventually become my pride ~nya."

Do all the Beast Race I have fought treat their wounds as a source of pride?

"..."

Rinia looks to the sky in silence.

"..."

I look up as well.

Unique to the North, a grey sky as far as the eye can see.

Tonight will snow as well.

"Well, what are you going to do now?"

"From now on ~nya?"

"You said a free life, but do you have anything you want to do?"

"Yes ~nya. After traveling around for a bit, get into trade ~nya."

Trade, huh?

I have a bad feeling about this.

I think she has better chances as an adventurer.

"Any specifics?"

"Of course ~nya."

Rinia said confidently.

As long as she knows what she's doing.

No, it still feels wrong.

If she goes about it so casually, she'll get in trouble.

"If it all goes according to plan, in 5 years I can make a ton of money ~nya."

"... Well, then, if you get in trouble, come ask for my help?"

"Nyahaha. After I succeed, I'll lend money to Boss ~nya."

Rinia seems rather opportunistic even though she lost.

She might have decided on her own, but now she's no longer bound by home. She has won her freedom.

Or maybe, she's just putting up an act.

Regardless, her face reads, it's finally over.

Part 7

Rinia and Pursena did not say goodbye to anyone else.

They each return to the student housing at separate times. After dressing their wounds, they immediately took their luggage and left the school.

Nanahoshi and I each watched Pursena and Rinia leave by themselves.

Neither said much more.

They just asked us to let Zanoba and Cliff know.

They also apologized to Sylphy and Ariel.

Pursena will head back to the Great Forest and work hard to become the next clan head.

I don't know the details, but Rinia will do as she planned.

They do not plan to meet again.

That was the plan.

This kind of lifestyle is so cool.

A bit of gossip.

That night, I heard a rumor.

"Someone saw two Beast Race girls with luggage quarreling at a public carriage stop."

Supposedly.

I guess they forgot to schedule separate times at the public carriage and accidentally ran into each other.

How careless.

Coming year:

3rd Year: Norn (Bancho's Sister), Elinalise (Old Elf)

4th Year: Rudeus (Water King Class Magician)

5th Year: Zanoba (Figure Monster), Cliff (Normie ^[42])

6th Year: Nanahoshi (Summoning Sister)

7th Year: Ariel (Asura Second Princess), Sylphy (Mother of 1), Luke (Hot Guy)

Graduated: Rinia (Loser, Cat), Pursena (Winner, Dog)

CHAPTER 11

FOURTH PHASE

Part 1

Days after the graduation ceremony.

Right now I'm looking at a giant magic circle.

At first glance it looks like a brick.

Actually a stack of A2-sized paper with magic circles covering the front and back.

At least 100 sheets or so tall.

Wooden frames keep the stack together on four corners, and the frame also has a magic circle drawn on it.

Probably a magic tool of sorts.

Construction has taken a really long time.

I helped, but it has mostly been Nanahoshi.

"If you please."

Standing besides the magic circle, Nanahoshi said.

Cliff and Zanoba beside her.

They also helped with the research.

Thus they also want to witness the research advance as well.

Nanahoshi was reluctant, but since it's their right to ask, she caved eventually.

That's the excuse, but honestly they're there in case Nanahoshi goes berserk if it fails again.

And to help console Nanahoshi.

Consoled by the opposite sex, it should have some effect.

Men and women together, it has worked for me.

At least find a few guys to pamper her.

Head to a tavern somewhere, order some Dom Perignon, and go crazy.

Cliff, Zanoba, the three of us.

But this time I feel confident.
Cliff guaranteed it when the blueprint was outlined.
Thanks to the prosthetic limb research, Cliff's skills have reached another level.
It should work... probably.

Okay.

"Magic injection begins."

I place a hand over the edge of the magic circle.

"..."

My magic begins pouring in.
Rapidly magic is sucked from my palm.

The consumption rate is incredible.
Probably beyond the capacity of anyone else.

Thinking carefully, it's obvious.
Back in the days, Sylphy was exhausted after just a single one of these magic circles,
so equivalent to an advanced level magic in consumption.
And now we have 100 of them.
Although Cliff helped limit the magic consumption, so it's not 100 times, it should at
least still be 10, 20 times the usual.

"How time consuming. We should improve on this area a bit..."
"Shh."

Cliff murmurs to himself, but Nanahoshi stops him.

Blood-like, magic streams continuously from my heart.
The magic circles shine in reaction to the magic power.

Nothing feels off this time.
And the magic flow has been normal.
Light from the magic circle outlines complex patterns.
Colors changing constantly.

Yellow, red, purple, white...
Deja vu.
I have seen these lights before.

Metastasis Event.
The same colors as back then.

What do I do? Should I stop?
If it happens now, then Zanoba and Cliff will fall in as well.
No, it might lead to a bigger disaster.
Sylphy and Norn have school today too.
No, not just the school, the city, Lucy, everything...

But, nothing strange thus far.
In the first place, the magic circle we made doesn't have that kind of power.
We spent a long time gaining experience to prevent that from happening.
It'll work.
It's fine; it'll work.

"...!"

Light glows brighter.
Then, it begins to dim.

Dong.

A soft noise.
Magic flow quickly ceased.
Light disappears from the magic circle.

"..."

Middle of the magic circle.
A green object.
A pretty round thing patterned black and green.
A shiny, watery item from earth, in patterns of black and green.

A watermelon.



"Success!"

"Awesome!"

Nanahoshi stands up, a victory pose.

"Congratulations, Shisho!"

"We did it!"

Cliff and Zanoba applause cheerfully.

"Say..."

Cliff approaches the watermelon in anticipation and pokes it.

"Green and yellow, what an inauspicious exterior... Can I hold it? Will it bite?"

"Okay, but don't drop it. It's unexpectedly fragile."

"Oh... It's rather heavy."

Cliff picks up the watermelon with curiosity and looks all over it.

A watermelon's color does look rather unlucky.

For people of this world, the black and green pattern is something to be feared.

The inside is blood red too, of course it looks a bit disgusting.

But this world has many strangely shaped fruits and vegetables as well.

If we search carefully, it's possible that something like watermelon exists in this world too.

I think I remember seeing some kind of a melon before.

"Hey, Nanahoshi."

"What?"

"Now that I think about it, wouldn't summoning a Yubari King be better? Since that's a hybrid cultivar, it definitely wouldn't exist in this world."

"You... do you even know the difference between regular and hybrid melons?"

Having her say that, I was a bit stumped as well.

At best, I can tell prince melon and cantaloupe apart.

"Anyways, I can't go that detailed yet. Actually, I was trying to summon a cabbage this time."

Subtle emotion surfaces as Nanahoshi said.

This world has vegetables like cabbage too.

So could we tell the difference?

Figure out whether we summoned a cabbage from this world or the other.

I'm no farmer.

Neither is Nanahoshi.

Summoning vegetables might have been a mistake from the start.

"..."

No, it's fine.

An experiment is based on theory, and we have results.

Then, this watermelon should be fine.

Although we can't confirm whether it's from this world.

But, all in all, watermelon is watermelon.

Calling it a success isn't a lie.

"Well, since it's a success, let's celebrate!"

Zanoba looks uninterested, probably because it wasn't doll shaped.

"Ah, fine."

Badigadi, Pursena, and Rinia.

Those lively people are gone.

The party will feel a bit shabby without them.

But, let's put that aside for now.

Part 2

That night we hosted a banquet.

Pursena and Rinia are gone.

But Roxy and Norn sub in for them.

By count, only Badigadi is short.

Lost a few lively folks, but gain a few more family.

The mood is different, but that's not a bad thing.

Nanahoshi chugs down mugs of beer on one hand, holding Julie like a doll on her lap with her other, while chatting with Elinalise.

Elinalise has a loving smile as she listens to Nanahoshi.

Zanoba and Cliff are busy discussing something with Roxy.

From the look on their faces, they're talking about the research.

"Okay, here Rudi."

"Ah, thank you, Sylphy."

Sitting besides me, Sylphy pours me a drink.

"Sylphy's not drinking today?"

"I'm weird when I'm drunk, so I'm going to hold back today."

"... Really?"

"We're not staying out tonight, and I need to say goodnight with Lucy afterwards."

"I understand."

But I think Sylphy is so cute when she's drunk.

That uninhibited flirting.

But that kind of self control shows off her motherly side too.

As I think and flirt with Sylphy, Roxy comes over.

"Rudi, may I?"

"Em?"

"Pull out a chair for me?"

Following her instructions I pull out a chair, but instead she decides to sit on my lap.
Her hair before my eyes.
I can feel her butt on my thighs.
This. How wonderful.
Ah, this is bad.

"Roxy, are you drunk?"

Sylphy asks with a forced smile.

"A little."

Looking carefully, Roxy looks a little flush.
She usually doesn't drink at all, how strange.
Am I witnessing a rare moment when Roxy lets loose?

"Phew~"

Roxy leans against me.
Pushing her weight gently on my chest.
I can hear her heart beating.

Amazing, from this angle, if I pull just a little on her robe I might see what's inside.
What should I do?
I want to see.
Let's get her a little more drunk.

"How nice... I want a turn."

"Of course, Sylphy."

If not, Roxy on my left, and Sylphy on my right works too.
Few days ago when we're sleeping together. It was also Roxy left, Sylphy right. That was amazing.
Happiness overflowing from both hands kind of feeling.

"... Brother."

Oops, with my perverted thoughts exposed, Norn has been staring.
No good, no good.

Without realizing it, I have been neglecting Norn.
She's not familiar with many in this circle.
She probably met everyone already, but I doubt they have had many conversations.
All she did was stare quietly at me from the start.

"Sorry, Norn. You're probably not used to this."
"No, it's fine. I have something I need to talk about, can I?"
"Ah, sure."

I sit Roxy on the chair nearby and turn to face Norn.

"Em. Well, it's about the Student Council."
"Oh, that thing."

On Graduation Day.
Norn was sitting at the back seat for the Student Council.
Norn looked troubled when I spotted her. It made an impression.

"Ariel-sama invited me. She said although my grades are not spectacular, I have the drive."
"So that's what happened... Does Sylphy know about this?"
"Yes. I'm aware."

I ask Sylphy and she nods to confirm.
I guess she knew.
If I have to guess, Roxy should know too. When I turn to check, Roxy purposely looked away. So she knew too!
The only one that doesn't is me.
What the heck?

"Sorry. Norn-chan said she wanted to tell you herself, so I kept quiet."
"Is that so?"

Sylphy looks troubled as she apologizes.
Maybe she's not drinking precisely for this.
Norn continues with a troubled expression.

"So, brother. May I officially join the Student Council?"

Of course.

I was just about to answer when I stop myself.

Norn is already busy with two things.

Sword training and writing.

The book doesn't have to be hurried, just once a week is enough. We can even take a break and start again in a few years, but sword training needs to be done daily.

Sword training and regular studies.

And Student Council on top of that, can Norn handle all that?

Norn isn't worse than others, but she isn't particularly good either.

Can she juggle 3-4 things at once?

"Norn."

"Yes."

"Can you handle so many things at once?"

"..."

Norn bites her lips.

Maybe she realizes herself that it might be too much pressure.

"I'm not against you joining the Student Council, but will you give up halfway?"

"I won't."

"You started writing and sword training on your own too. Well, writing was originally my job, so let's ignore that. What about sword training then? School too, third year will be even harder."

"I'll work hard at school and sword training too."

Easier said than done.

But doing so many things at once.

If you chase two rabbits, you will surely lose them both.

"Rudi."

Sylphy looks at me worriedly.

"Norn-chan. She has done well up to now."

Really?

Up to now. Indeed.
But what about in the long term?
Will she crash and burn?

"Say, how long has she been helping?"

"Over a year at the Student Council. I remember since it was when Rudi left on his journey."

"Eh? Wow, that's a long time."

During my journey.

In other words, even before sword training with me?

... Eh?

"Don't worry, Rudi. I guarantee it. Even after Norn-chan becomes an official member of the Student Council, she can do it all, and she won't cave halfway."

Sylphy sounds convincing.

Really?

So it's not a question of whether she can handle it, they drop the question after knowing for sure it can be done.

In that case, who am I to disagree?

"Yes... Norn has always been working hard."

While I'm not looking, Norn has been doing her best.

That makes me really happy.

A happiness hard to put into words.

"I get it. Although I don't think she needs my permission for this, but I'll permit it. Norn. Please work hard from now on."

"Yes, brother! Thank you!"

Norn bows happily.

Ultimately, it's up to her.

But cheering her on is the job of us around her.

So I'll do my best to cheer her on.

While I was thinking, I suddenly hear Nanahoshi's voice.

"Let's cut the watermelon."

Everyone got a slice of the watermelon we summoned today.
It's sweeter than I remembered, but a little dry.
Definitely from California.

Putting the taste aside.
I noticed one thing when we cut it open.

It's seedless.
That growing method should be unknown in this world.

In other words, it's a success.

Part 3

The banquet reaches its climax.
Maybe that's a bit off.

Nanahoshi singing; Norn dancing.
Zanoba talks dolls with Norn.
Sylphy is taking care of the wasted Roxy.
Cliff and Elinalise are busying themselves.

With the banquet coming to a close, I feel a particular fatigue.
Letting the alcohol take over, I lean against my chair.
This feels nice.

"... Well done."

Just now, Nanahoshi comes beside me.

"... Cough, cough..."

Nanahoshi looks unwell.
Unwell because of drinking?
If she has a cold, she should have held off on the alcohol.

"Want me to help with detox?"
"... Please."

I cast detoxification and healing magic on her, and she finally looks more relaxed.
Looking a little better, she can finally relax.

"Anyways, thank you. With this done, we can proceed to the next stage."
"That's fine."

I have been assisting Nanahoshi's research for 3 years now.
Time sure has passed fast.
Compared to Phase 1, Phase 2 and 3 have been easy.
Of course Zanoba and Cliff helped too, but it has proceeded far smoother than my anticipation.

"If I remember right, Phase 4 is to summon an animal."

"That's right. I have a friend in this area, so I plan to go ask about it."

The summoning expert she mentioned before?

"Don't tell me it's Orsted."

"No. Although Orsted can use summoning magic too, it's someone else."

Someone else.

Say, Orsted even knows summoning magic.

As the Hitogami said, Orsted really knows all the techniques of this world.

But using and knowing are separate issues.

Innovator and user are two different things.

"So I have a suggestion."

"What is it?"

"I have yet to reward you for the PET bottle experiment, right?"

"Oh yeah."

Now that she mentions it, I really did forget it.

Back then, I was busy taking care of Lucy.

People won't ask for more once they're satisfied.

"Including this time's favor, how about I introduce that person to you?"

"Introductions?"

"Honestly speaking, if you're interested in summoning magic, then learning directly from him would be better."

Well, I don't really want to learn other world summoning.

True, summoning various things from the other world can be rather useful.

I also want to try to summon a baby bottle or a stroller.

But I can live without them.

I'm content with what I have.

But I'm rather interested in regular summoning magic.

I probably won't have many opportunities to use this, so it's purely out of curiosity.

If I want to understand the cause of the Metastasis Event, then this knowledge is indispensable.

"Is that person that big of a deal that he's worth two favors?"

"Em. Perhaps he can do something about your mother's memory loss as well."

"What...?"

Hearing that, I couldn't help but jump up.

Norn leans over too, probably wanting more details as well.

"Really?"

"I don't know for sure, but he has lived for a long time. There's a good chance he might know a way."

Cure Zenith's memory loss.

Although I think her recovery has been rather smooth.

But we don't know if her memory can really be recovered.

Even if there's no cure, but if we can figure out the name and cause of her illness, along with my knowledge from the past world, then maybe we can do something about it.

My knowledge of the past life is so-so, but it's possible.

"Are you talking about Nanahoshi's Shisho?"

"If possible, please introduce me as well."

I don't know when, but Zanoba and Cliff have come over as well.

Elinalise sticking behind Cliff.

She's busying herself with his ear. I don't know what for, but at least she looks happy.

"Well... You helped too. I can make the introduction."

Nanahoshi looks a little troubled.

Probably not an easy character to talk about.

"Ah, me too!"

While I was thinking, Sylphy leans over as well.

Roxy fell asleep on a row of chairs.

Norn is probably not interested, she's watching us from a distance beside Roxy.

If we do go, then they probably want to join too.

Including Nanahoshi that's 7 in all.

"Wouldn't it be troublesome with so many people?"

"... That should be fine. He said 12 or less is fine. Even if everyone goes it should not be a problem."

Nanahoshi nods, looking composed.

Basically, Zanoba and Cliff want to go.

But if Nanahoshi's side is okay with it, then I don't have a reason to refuse.

"Will the visit take long?"

A few months walk?

Maybe a bit faster with using the teleportation ruins.

Traveling to the teleportation ruins alone takes 5 days.

To and from, that's 10 days.

Including the rest of the trip, it'll take at least a month.

With Lucy here, I don't want to stay away for so long.

"It only takes a day if we want."

"Ah, that's awfully close. So you meet often then?"

Only a day?

So only 2 days of travel.

Even if we stay over for a few days, then we can be back in a week.

At that distance, we might as well bring Lucy too.

"Distance-wise it's not particularly close. We don't meet very often either. But if we do, there's a way."

Communication via magic tool?

Although I have yet to see a magic tool like telephones, I have seen instant teleportation.

Then, maybe telephone exists too.

Mails take a long time to send.

But if they have something setup already, then it could be faster and easier.

Like a signal flare or something.

"Ah I see. Then, who's this person you speak of."

Nanahoshi frowns.

She looks around at all the customers around us, then signals us to come closer.

Like telling a secret we put our heads together.

Nanahoshi quietly said.

"Promise you won't tell?"

We all nod after Nanahoshi asked.

Then, she said.

"Armored Dragon King Perugius."

400 years ago, the one that led humans to victory in the Laplace Campaign, one of the three heroes who vanquished the Demon god.

SIDE STORY

BIRTH OF A NEW SWORD KING

Part 1

The 『Space of the Present』, the Holy Land of Swords.
There knelt three Sword Saints.

Nina Farion.
Jino Britts.
Eris Greyrat.

Standing in front of them was the Sword God, Gull Farion. The Sword God leisurely moved his hand to the sword at his waist, overlooking the three of them. He slowly opened his mouth.

"Your sword techniques have already surpassed the bounds of a Sword Saint."

At those words, Jino's shoulders faintly trembled.

"I think that it's about time to choose the next Sword King after Ghyslaine."

Jino's eyes widened. Fists clenched, he trembled all over. His body was taken over by feelings of joy. He was single-mindedly keeping in check his desire to jump up in joy. However, the Sword God continued to speak.

"Before that, a question."

"..."

"Do you lot understand the difference between Sword Saints, Sword Kings, and Sword Emperors?"

"...Is it their strength?"

The one who muttered this was Nina. You could see in all their eyes that they were asking if there was anything else besides strength. However, at the same time, they all knew. They knew that what the Sword God wanted to hear something that was

beyond that. That he wanted to hear what came before this strength, and where this strength came from.

Not answering Nina, the Sword God instead asked her another question.

"Nina. What was it that your Shisho told you before you learnt the 『Longsword of Light』 ?"

Nina's Shisho wasn't Sword God Gull Farion. She was the direct disciple of Jino's father, Sword Emperor Timothy Britts. Recalling his teachings, Nina squeezed out her words.

"[Because you're right handed, train your left hand.] he said. I was told that until I could use the sword perfectly with my left hand, I wasn't to use the 『Longsword of Light』 ."

"That's right. The hand that isn't dominant is needed for the 『Longsword of Light』 . Do you know why?"

"If your dominant hand is filled with power, the tip of your sword will shake side to side."

"Right. Collecting all your touki and cutting right through. It's simple, but that's the heart of the 『Longsword of Light』 ."

Swordsmanship was to cut down a moving opponent. If you just foolishly slashed head-on, your attack would just be simply avoided. That's why slashes from below, slashes from the side, slashes that slanted; various slashing techniques were devised so that a swordsman could cut the opponent.

However, the first generation Sword God was different. He had no use for such things. He would just swing his sword faster than anyone, and cut everything in two.

"The heart of the Longsword of Light is filled with the history of the Sword God Style."

The Sword God tapped the pommel of his sword with a sound.

"The thing that Shodai-sama^[43] somehow managed to do, is what each generation of Sword Gods after him spent their time refinement little by little, until it finally became the present Sword God Style. The Longsword of Light... The refinement of its key points, the principle behind it, and the way to train in it; when these were followed to the end, what we ended up with was something simple. It became something that anyone with a little talent will be able to use. This change marked the beginning of the

Sword God Style's recognition as the strongest. We Sword Gods have refined^[44] Shodai-sama's techniques, and together with him were able to spread the name of the Sword God Style far and wide."

With a sound, the Sword God tapped the sword pommel again.

"The 『Longsword of Light』 is the ultimate technique of the Sword God Style. It's what other styles would call a 『secret technique』. Even though you've all learned the same principles, something like differences in strength appeared. Sword Saint, Sword King, Sword Emperor... It's ridiculous huh? Even though you all know the same bloody things, for there to be strong guys and weak guys is, you know...?"

Having said that, the Sword God turned to face Jino.

"What do you think the difference is? Jino, try answering."

Having been asked this, Jino lowered his face. His face was plastered with anxiety. He didn't know the answer to the question. However, the impatience of not being able to answer quickly forced his mouth open.

"T-, thinking about it logically, excepting techniques, it would be the skill and strength of their footwork, or it could be... w-, the quality of their weapons?"

"WEAPONNNS!? You, just how many years have you been practicing!? Wouldn't it be better for you to start from scratch again, huuuh!?"

"I-, I'm truly sorry!"

At the Sword God's angry shout, Jino completely paled and hung his head.

Jino had wanted to answer 『ability』. However, he knew very well that it wasn't the answer that the Sword God wanted. It wouldn't have been an answer that you could so easily write off the problem with. At any rate, it was a discussion about what the heart and origin of talent was. Had he answered 'ability', he might really have been chased out of this place.

"Since you're still a brat, you don't get it, huh? Well, whatever. Even if they don't get it, strong people will remain strong. Alright. Well then, Nina, you try answering it then."

"..."

Being asked this, Nina carefully considered it. What he was asking was probably about Sword Gods, Sword Emperors, and Sword Kings; the difference between her and the ones above her. They had something that Nina and the others lacked. Come to think about it, the Sword God and Sword Emperors all had partners already. Something that she wanted. A boyfriend? A husband? She glanced towards Jino. He was hanging his head. His expression was truly mortified. It couldn't be helped that he, who was younger, was recently on Nina's mind. And at that moment she recalled the word that the Sword God often used.

"...Is it 『desire』 ?"

"Hah, lately you've realised it as well, huh? As expected of my daughter."

The Sword God smiled as though peering into the depths of Nina's heart. Nina was perturbed. This type of training continued.

"『Desire』 isn't wrong. But yanno, just how far can you endure for your desires?"^[45]

"Endure...?"

"For example, between marrying Jino or becoming Sword King, if you were asked to choose one, which would you choose?"

Hearing the word marriage, Nina and Jino's gazes overlapped. Nina's cheeks turned a little red.

"...I would pick becoming Sword King."

Between marrying Jino or becoming a Sword King, she would probably pick the latter. In other words, her desire was of that level. Nina realised the mistake in her words.

"You're as naive as ever, huh. Then Eris, what do you think?"

"It's resolve."

Eris immediately replied. Without thinking about anything, she immediately replied.

"『Resolve』 . That's wrong, huh."

The Sword God smiled and rejected it. However, glaring at the Sword God, Eris replied once more.

"It's not wrong. It's 『resolve』 ."

What floated through Eris's mind at that moment was a scene from long ago. The figure of Rudeus being stabbed through the chest by Orsted. She who had lamented her powerlessness, and he who had fallen.

She had become stronger since then. Whether it was her power or speed, there was a huge difference compared to a few years ago. However, she couldn't win against Orsted. These past few years of training had allowed Eris to see her limits. It was probably the case that no matter how much she trained from now, she would still never reach Orsted.

However, as long as she was with Rudeus... As long as she was with Rudeus, her hand would reach Orsted. He, a magician, and she, a warrior, would do it together.

Even if they stabbed each other, as long as she could stop Orsted's movements, Rudeus would finish the rest. If Rudeus could defeat him, then it was their win. Of course, she would die and Rudeus would live. Were this to happen, she'd never have a future together with Rudeus. However, even that was fine. If she considered the future, she would get cold feet. If she got cold feet, her sword would dull. If her sword dulled, then Rudeus as well would die. In that case, it was better that she died.

Eris was resolved.

"In that case, are you fine even if you don't become a Sword King?"

"I don't really care."

"Don't you wanna get stronger?"

"Yeah. I do. But something like a title doesn't matter, right?"

The Sword God then murmured happily,

"Alright, Eris and Nina. You two fight, and the winner will be chosen as the Sword King!"

Part 2

Eris and Nina. The two of them stood facing each other.

"..."

The two of them were both holding wooden swords. However, with both of them using Sword Saint techniques, it would be easy for them to lose their lives.

"This brings to mind the time when I first came, huh?"

"Yeah, it does, huh."

What floated through their minds was something that happened a few years ago; the time when Ghyslaine had brought Eris here. Because of that beast-like girl, humiliation had been planted inside Nina. In front of the other Sword Saints, as well as Jino, she was shamefully made to wet herself. When she remembered this, it made her want to cover up her face and roll about on the ground in embarrassment.

However, she didn't bear any hatred towards Eris. Because of Eris, she had become stronger. Her conceit was gone, and she whole-heartedly applied herself to her training. Thinking about it that way, she could say with confidence that the humiliation had fueled her growth.

"I'll definitely win today."

The moment Nina said this, bloodlust welled up from Eris. However, Nina didn't falter. With a clear expression like that of a monk who had reached enlightenment, she beheld Eris.

"...Hmph."

The next moment, Eris's bloodlust quickly disappeared. Then, an expression in contrast to Nina's, appeared on Eris's face. She was smiling. It was an unpleasant smile, but Eris was smiling. It was the smile of a wild beast.

Nina instinctively felt fear at that smile. During their training with Water King Isolte, she had fought Eris countless times. And she had lost. Of course, there were also times when she won. However, only the the memories of her failures remained burned in her mind.

"..."

Eris didn't move. With that beastly smile still plastered to her face, she stood still. It was something rare for Eris who always took the initiative.

The word 'counter' floated in Nina's mind. The counter that she had faced countless times in battle with Isolte. Eris couldn't use the techniques of the Water God Style. However, there were also counters in the North God Style. That was probably Eris's aim.

A silence flowed through the place.

There stood Eris in a middle-guard, and Nina in a high-guard.^[46]

The two stood still at a range^[47] of a single step and swing away from each other.

Nina was expressionless, and Eris was smiling.

Like a strange artwork, the two of them merely stood there, glaring at each other.

For those of the Sword God Style whose motto was [Victory goes to he who moves first], it was a rare stillness.

The two of them stood close together, stock still.

Frankly speaking, the Sword God sighed at them.

"How long is your marriage interview going to go on for?"

Those words became a trigger.

The one who moved was Nina.

She took a sharp step forward.

It was a movement of the Sword God Style that she had practiced tens of thousands of times.

Taking a step into the absolutely most optimal and logical place, she sent explosive energy into her upper body.

That energy combined with the touki emitted from Nina's body.

It was transmitted through her arms, and then into her blade.

『The Longsword of Light』 .

The sword which boasted an overwhelming velocity swung downwards from her upper-guard.

Her execution was perfect.

It was so perfect a 『Longsword of Light』 that anyone watching might have been mesmerised by it.

However.

"GAAH-!"

Nina suffered a terrifying blow to her abdomen and was sent flying backwards. She smacked into the wall of the dojo, and then collapsed onto the ground. Her dougi was ripped, and her well trained abdomen was visible. On that abdomen of hers, a swell like a long red earthworm was beginning to form. While she felt a burning pain, the Sword God made a declaration.

"That's enough!"

Nina looked at Eris with a dumbfounded expression. Eris whose brow was wet with lots of sweat. Though her dougi was a little torn at the shoulder, that was it. Her face was no longer smiling. However, her figure was that of a victor.

"...Kuh."

Nina comprehended what had happened.

Eris had stepped in at roughly the same time that Nina had. Then, in the face of Nina who was using an upper-guard, Eris dropped low to the ground and simultaneously let loose in a horizontal slash her own 『Longsword of Light』 .

However, she couldn't understand. In that case, it should have been her attack that connected first. Nina was the one who moved first and her sword swings were just a little faster than Eris. Furthermore, an attack from an upper-guard should have been even faster. Since that was the case, even if Eris lowered her head a little, it wouldn't have been strange for Nina's own sword to reach first. Even though that was the case, the result was that it wasn't even a simultaneous attack. For some reason she collapsed, whilst Eris was standing.

"You don't need more power than what's necessary to knock someone down."

Eris had spoken quietly. Nina didn't understand the meaning of those words.

What Eris had used was a technique of the North God Style. Normally, the 『Longsword of Light』 was something whose power was overkill for use on every opponent. Eris traded that power for speed. She limited the amount of power in her

swing to what was necessary to knock Nina down, and moved quickly with just that much. The ability to distribute touki was something that she had learned through training the North God Style.

However, the speed that she gained from such a thing was just a slight amount. Compared to the amount of deadly might the swing had, the speed gain was disproportionate. However, because of that slight speed gain, she was able to turn the tables by just a hair's breadth, and it was enough to decide victory or defeat.

"Well done, Eris. I'll grant you the title Sword King."

Nina slowly got up. She felt a dull pain at her abdomen, and grimaced.

(I was completely done in.)

Because it was a wooden sword, it had ended with just being knocked away, but had it been a real sword, her organs would probably have spilled out. Of course it wouldn't be strange for a Longsword of Light to cut a person in two, but just the slash Nina would have received would have been more than enough to kill her. On the other hand, Eris had gotten away with just a cut to the shoulder. Nina had completely lost. Nina let out a sigh, and stood up straight where she was. She had lost in every way. She had moved first, and then lost. She lost.

Lost.

Something heavy and painful began to rise into Nina's chest.

"Are you frustrated, Nina?"

"Yes."

Large drops of tears were flowing from Nina's eyes.

"You still have room to grow. Focus on your training."

"Yes, Otou-san."

On that day, Nina had referred to him as her father for the first time in a long time.

"..."

The Sword God waited until Nina had stopped crying. Eris, with her mouth upturned into a , and with her arms crossed, waited as well.

Part 3

After he had made sure that Nina had stopped crying, the Sword God spoke to Eris.

"Eris. You've gained the title Sword King, but I already have nothing to teach you. I'll give you the proof of mastery."^[48]

Proof of mastery. When they heard these words, Nina and Jino looked at each other. This was a title that neither the two Sword Emperors, nor Ghyslaine had been given. The proof of mastery was that amazing of a title.

"Though it'd also be fine to jump you straight up to Sword Emperor but... you'd have to fight Ghyslaine here. If you want to jump up to Sword God then you'll have to kill me."

[What will you do?]

As if asking this, the Sword God moved his hand to his sword. Eris shook her head.

"I don't care about the Sword God or whatever."

"Right? ...Well then, what do you plan on doing from now?"

"First of all I'm going to go to where my family is."

Looking right into Eris's eyes, the Sword God felt their radiance.

He felt that she possessed something that he had lost at some point.

Because she possessed an earnest attitude towards getting stronger without losing sight of her goal...

Or it could be that because she was Eris...

He thought that perhaps she might be able to defeat that peerless Orsted.

"Come, Eris. As proof of your ascension to Sword King, I'll give you one of my seven swords."

"...Yes."

That day, it signaled the end of Eris Greyrat's long training.

Eris had parted with the Sword God, and the ceremony for bestowing the Sword King title had finished. Only two people remained there.

"..."

For a while, the two sat there in silence. Both of their chests held frustration and envy. However, they would absolutely never speak of these feelings, nor show them on their faces.

"..."

Without doing either, the two of them stood up. Walking side by side, they moved to the corner of the 『Space of the Present』 and picked up the wooden swords that were left there.

For a little while, the sounds of wooden swords striking each other could be heard from the 『Space of the Present』. Because it was the Holy Land of Swords, this was a sound that could be heard anywhere.

To be continued.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Note: For anyone who isn't Buddhist/familiar with Buddhism, Mara:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mara_%28demon%29
2. Morning wood. NSFW
3. Note: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lycoris_radiata
4. Note: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stupa> Also a euphemism for his dick.
5. Note: Steins;Gate, in the titular Steins;Gate, refers to a certain world line where neither WW3 nor Illuminati dystopia occurs. This particular phrase is a quote from the protagonist (a chu2) who would often say nonsense like "This is all according to the will of Steins;Gate!"
6. Note: http://gs-mikami.wikia.com/wiki/Tadao_Yokoshima
7. Need editing
8. This is written in English.
9. the word used here is ガラ (gara) maybe short for trash (がらくた)
10. "Chiiisu!" Edit to good English equivalent please
11. Same as above
12. Somekind of japanese proverb 根も葉も (ne mo ha mo)
13. I'm not so sure about this. ED: hang filed to hand filing as it is the only thing that makes sense
14. What's the english equivalent of this sentence. -ED- Cliff sniff with his nose. :snort: is too strong. Imagine a dainty and young minister, sniff at the transgression, and start lecturing. What about a sniffle? It would go sniff (silent) < sniffle (sound) < snort (loud)
15. He uses 修羅場 (shuraba) here, which means something like "a scene of carnage" but also is used to refer to relationship difficulties. It was translated as "Hell" when it showed up as a chapter title, so that's what I'm going to use here.
16. Roxy's panties and Sylphy's virgin blood cloth

17. Note: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Butsudan>
18. Note: otsukaresamadesu
19. Note: There's a line in Shigurui said by Fujiki Gennosuke that goes "Ushimata-dono, they won't remember it unless it hurts." It might be a reference to that (it's mildly famous on the net).
20. Note: otsukaresamadeshita
21. Riajuu is internet slang for somebody who has a good life: <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=riajuu>
22. Note: Otsukaresamadesu
23. Does the title of the chapter is "I'll Raise it" (main page version) or "What I Raised"(chapter page version) ?
24. TL: I got the implication here that Zanoba sent Ginger as an escort to assist whoever was bringing them back
25. TL: Health and physical education. JP terminology.
26. TN: Shoubu fuku, implied here as a seduction outfit
27. Oppai Sennin, aka the old imaginary horn dog cheering on his sexual exploits. Literal translation is something like Breast Sage.
28. Kyuumaseki.
29. ManataitoHyudora.
30. Japanese custom calling an author "sensei".
31. Rudi, Rudi~! There is no such thing as overkill, only "Open Fire!" and "More Reloads!"
32. Threesome.
33. Unsure," 一度ぐらいはやってみたいと思うのが、男の性だ。
男は欲望に忠実な狼なのだ。"
34. Buddhist demon of temptation.
35. Reference to a catchphrase of Japanese comedian Hikomaro.

36. Tsurikichi Sanpei, a fishing manga by Takao Yaguchi.
37. This was about him not being able to catch any fish turning into him being bald via the rumor circulating like the telephone game, iirc
38. Bioshock reference
39. Ladder? What ladder?? Don't you mean stairs???
40. Unsure: 俺は二人の背後に百獣の王を見たものだ。
41. fighting or boxing at close quarters
42. actually リア充/Rear Charge: 2ch slang for someone who is satisfied with his real (offline) life.
43. Note: Shodai = first generation. You guys watch Naruto, yeah?
44. Note: Strictly speaking it's not 'refinement' by 'clarification' or 'making clear'. Basically they researched the technique and made clear everything about it.
45. Note: more lit. 'how far can your desires endure'?
46. Note: For ppl who aren't familiar with swords, left is Nina, right is Eris
47. Note: maai
48. Note: lit. that she's gunna gain Menkyo Kaiden.

